

FURS & FURRIERY.

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PREFACE

THERE is no more gratifying proof of the increased interest now being taken by young furriers in their work than the attention and interest shown at lectures held at the Furriers' Classes.

In my desire to gain further knowledge of the practical side of the Fur trade, I endeavoured to obtain English Literature dealing with the subject ; but after a long search I came to the conclusion that there was no work obtainable dealing with the practical side of Furriery. I came across a number of books dealing with Natural History, and what I might term "The Romance of Furs," but nothing which would assist a worker to make a fur garment.

Knowing how, in my youthful days, I felt the need of such a work, I determined after increased knowledge and experience to try to give to the furrier the fruits of my labour, in as clear and concise a manner as possible.

In this book simplicity of style has been my chief aim, for, undoubtedly, a text-book of this description should make clearness a fundamental attribute.

For the past seven years I have lectured on Furriery at the Northampton Polytechnic Institute. I found my students most eager to possess all the knowledge I could give them, and it gives me great pleasure to think that, although business affairs preclude my lecturing at the Polytechnic Institute in the coming year, I am able to present to them, as well as to other furriers, this book, which embodies the substance of

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my lectures. I have included very many diagrams, which I trust will appeal to the average worker. I have not dwelt upon any subject other than practical work, to any great extent, for the aim of this work must not be lost sight of. It is primarily a *Practical Work* for the Practical worker.

The few notes which I have added, and which do not appertain strictly to working, are included to give to the furrier an idea of facts relating to his trade. Should he desire to proceed further into these subjects, there are many standard works to which he could refer. I have included many short chapters on skins, which may appear as important as those I have treated yet more fully, the reason being that, with a certain knowledge of work, a furrier should be able to extend the method applied to one skin to others. This is exemplified in the treatment of the stone marten; further details required will be found in the working of sables.

In conclusion, I trust that this work will be of some assistance to furriers in difficulties. If this should be so I shall feel more than recompensed.

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INTRODUCTION.

THE object of this work is to bring before the English furrier in as concise a form as possible the principles of the fur trade. It is specially pointed out that this work is not intended to teach the furrier his business. In my opinion it is impossible to do so in book form, but as a work of reference and in conjunction with practical tuition it should prove of great assistance to him when in difficulty.

It is my view that the worker nowadays should possess a further knowledge than purely that of practical working principles. With this idea in mind I have included a chapter which deals with the origin of the trade, making special mention of the various parts of the world noted for furs which are extensively used, means of transport, methods of handling the raw skins and sorting them, as well as the manner in which they are finally offered for sale.

The reasons for difference in quality are dealt with under the heading of "Climatic Conditions," and this chapter should prove interesting as well as rather helpful to the worker. It also includes the causes why some skins are darker than others, as well as the difference in the size of one animal as compared with another.

I have deemed it essential to include these chapters herein both for the above-stated reason and also in the knowledge that, this present work being the only one of its kind in the English language, certain points of interest should be put on record.

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The natural history of each animal is also included, although not enlarged upon, as any further information on this particular subject may always be obtained from current publications on Natural History.

With regard to the actual working, which has been dealt with very carefully, all cutters will realise that a more difficult text-book could not be compiled, owing to the various opinions which exist as regards methods employed in the working, due to the fact that no two skins are alike. This latter fact has, of course, made matters extremely difficult in the compilation of the book, although all points have been included which have been deemed necessary.

It will be fully appreciated by all workers that no cuts can be standardised, and therefore, to overcome the difficulty this introduces, I have given as many methods as possible. It is left to the furrier to choose which method is adaptable to the particular skin he has in hand.

Many of the skins treated herewith are of a simple character, but I consider it desirable that these should be included, as it has been my aim that this volume shall be treated as a work of reference.

The importance of the nailer has been duly emphasised, for experience has taught me that a good nailer is very helpful in the workroom. The responsibility of the cutter has also been clearly defined, in that it is his duty from the moment the skins are handed to him to follow up all the processes to which a particular article may be subjected, including the finishing of them. I have devoted small articles to head mounting, twisting of tails, and boning of tails, as the correct carrying out of these details makes all

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the difference in the successful execution of an article.

The process of cleaning is covered by a separate heading, as well as also the outlines of the process of dressing and dyeing, and a cutter should find these subjects of help, particularly in discovering the reasons for general defects in skins and why on occasions the pelt of a skin is hard.

The need for a book of this description, which, by the way, has taken a long time to compile, is considered pressing, in view of the fact that we do not boast of an apprenticeship system in this country, and therefore all other means should be found to enlighten the workers in the trade. Abroad, some five years' apprenticeship is required of a boy desirous of entering the trade, and only on the production of credentials proving that he has been apprenticed for that period, and stating that during this time he has passed through every branch of the trade, is he considered a capable worker. On the other hand, in this country, a man with a short apprenticeship, if any at all, may at once take upon himself the work of cutting. This, it will be seen, does not reflect creditably on the trade, as it has the effect of spoiling valuable goods, which, if handled by an experienced mechanic, would be brought to a successful issue.

The absence of such a system, as already pointed out, makes it important that every means be found to aid the worker of to-day.

The reason why a large number of English skilled workers is not available is that the trade is a new one, comparatively speaking, in this country, and it takes many years, sometimes even generations, to establish

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such a trade and bring it up to the same level as that of our continental competitors.

It will be noticed that technical expressions, such as, for instance, the "centre of a skin," which really refers to the middle of it, have been used. This is done for the purpose of clearly pointing out to the cutter what is in the writer's mind.

In conclusion, I would say that it is my earnest desire that this work be taken in the spirit in which it is written, my motive being essentially to further the fur trade in this country, which is to-day, so far as the practical work is concerned, mostly in the hands of continental workers, and to establish a circle of English fur workers.

FURS AND FURRIERY

PART I

CHAPTER I

ADVANCE OF THE FUR TRADE

THE trapping of furs for the purpose of wearing apparel can be traced to prehistoric times, when skins in their natural state were the only coverings used by man. "Unto Adam also and to his wife did the Lord God make coats of skins and clothed them."

In those days fur-bearing animals were found all over the world, but owing to the expansion and civilisation of the human race as well as the altered climatic conditions of the fur-bearing regions of the world, certain of these have become rare.

The chief sources of the supply of furs to the whole world are Russia, Canada, the United States of America, Australia, New Zealand, and Asia (principally China and Japan). Africa and the British Isles are also responsible for a certain quantity and variety of furs.

It is a well-known fact that the quality of furs depends upon the severity of the weather with which the animal has to combat. It may be taken as a general rule that the more severe the climate, the better the coat of the animal. On the other hand, animals suitable for the furrier are also found in semi-tropical regions. To return to those trapped in cold climates, North America, Siberia and Russia are responsible for the finest specimens. The quantities of furs produced from the above parts of the world are also

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influenced by the extent of uncultivated tracts of land which these countries possess.

Russia is renowned for both quality and quantity, since in this country the fur-bearing animals are very thickly covered owing to the severity of the atmospheric conditions in certain parts, and, as already pointed out, it is prolific in fur-bearing animals due to its vast stretches of uncultivated territory, which permit them to breed freely. Some of the most beautiful furs, from the sable down to the hare, are found in these parts.

A proportion of the fur products is utilised by the inhabitants of Russia for their own needs, but a plentiful supply still remains for export to other countries.

It must often occur to those not conversant with the history of the trade, how extraordinary it is that London should be the market of the world considering how few furs are obtained from England. By reading the facts given below, the reader will understand how the trade was developed and encouraged by the country which to-day holds the key to prices and the world's supply. Little is known of the history of fur trading before the discovery by Christopher Columbus, 1492-1498, and subsequent explorers of vast tracts of land now known as the American Continent. The further discovery of South America in 1501 presented the possibility of increased commerce. At that period furs were bartered and exchanged. Most skins were reserved for Royalty and the aristocracy. The general population were forbidden to wear most of the furs trapped. The increased demand which coincided with supply stimulated the

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development of the fur trade. It is necessary to consider the economical conditions generally to appreciate the cause for this advance. As cause precedes effect, so demand is the forerunner of supply.

In 1497 a great expedition composed of Englishmen sailed from this country and discovered Labrador and Newfoundland, where they were the first to settle and form parties to buy furs from the Indians. Later, in 1620, the first batch of skins, consisting of fox, racoon and muskrat, was exported to this country by Englishmen. Henry Hudson penetrated the Arctic Regions in 1609. The settlers in these parts, who were Dutch, aided the English, further helping them to extend the tentacles of British fur traders.

About the middle of the sixteenth century the French navigators found a further field for huge quantities of furs on the Gulf of St. Lawrence. Towards the end of the sixteenth century trading posts were actually established in Canada and Virginia for the collection of pelts, the trappers by this time having acquired a considerable experience in their work. The settlers were in the habit of bartering glass beads, bottles of inferior whiskey, etc., in exchange for skins.

With the Indians, who were keen trappers, commercial enterprise in furs grew steadily, especially in Canada, which is now one of the most important sources. Here the English were aided by the French settlers in increasing the trade. During the reign of Charles II, the English were masters of the situation, and the King of England conferred the government of those parts on his brother James, Duke of York, in return for a quantity of beaver skins, forty in number, to be forwarded annually

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In 1670 Prince Rupert and his friends subscribed the capital and obtained from Charles II a charter incorporating them as the "Governor and Company of Merchant Adventurers trading to Hudson Bay." This Company did much to make the fur market an ever-growing enterprise but was hampered to a considerable degree by the continual disputes arising with the French settlers. The Treaty of Utrecht, 1713, put an end to all these troubles. The Hudson Bay Company was then able once again to forge ahead, penetrating and tapping new ground. Shipping facilities were greatly improved and the ever-growing volume of the fur trade broke down the barriers and led to furs being more popularly used. The conquest of Canada by Wolfe in 1759 and its cession to England by the Treaty of Paris, 1763, placed the Hudson Bay Company in a still more advantageous position. A subsequent charter gave them the sole right of trading from the Hudson Straits to the Pacific Coast. Fishery and mineral rights were included with the right to all animals trapped within the area. The retention of the sole right of trading expired in 1859, and the fur trade in British North America was thrown open to the world. In 1869, two years after the formation of the Dominion of Canada, the Company formally ceded its territorial claims for the sum of £300,000, retaining all its "forts" with limited acres around them. On this basis the Company was allowed to collect and deal in furs and derive a large income from the sale of its lands.

For many years traders secured their supplies direct from the Red Indians, but in later years the actual trappers consisted of white men as well as Indians,

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under the control of the Hudson Bay Company, who had created trading post after trading post until the Arctic districts were reached. Huge companies were formed in England amongst which the Skinners' Company played an important part.

The pioneers met with many difficulties. The means of trapping then were far different from those employed at the present day, and transport presented a great problem.

It has been found impossible to procure any work on the subject of how animals were trapped in bygone days, but from information received it appears that gruesome means were adopted. Wolves would be rounded up, after having been driven into nets by drivers and dogs, and then clubbed to death, the trapper on such occasions being protected by a head covering. Ingenious traps such as are used nowadays were not known. The method of trapping the fox, as example, consisted of digging a pit which was camouflaged as solid ground. Tempting morsels, such as a hen or some other bird, would be placed thereon as bait. The fox, entering the open part of the trap in order to procure this, would disturb the false flooring, and eventually find himself hurled into the pit.

Nets were also used to a very great extent in the trapping of certain animals. Another amateurish trap consisted of a great bar, at the end of which was attached a spear bearing bait. When this was interfered with, a spring would be released, causing the spear to pierce the animal. A great study was made of the peculiarities of each animal. Certain of the larger varieties were forced to charge drivers or hunters, who, when the animals were

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at a convenient distance, would throw a cloak over their heads, so causing them to come to a sudden halt. This had the effect of dazing the creatures, and the driver would usually be able to capture it intact. It is obvious that such methods as these meant far more work than is entailed at the present time. Now we have hundreds of traps set apart for various animals, which extend over miles of ground, and they are, furthermore, of an up-to-date nature, so that the animal suffers less pain and the work is executed much quicker.

Spring traps of steel construction are now extensively used. These secure the animal and hold it until the owner of the trap, who is generally near at hand, is able to put the animal to death in the shortest time. Many traps are used which catch the animal alive and intact. A device is then applied which painlessly kills the captive.

The protective laws make it a crime for traps to be other than of standard pattern, which is recognised to cause the animal as little pain as possible.

There are, in fact, hundreds of laws defining the methods of trapping animals. These laws operate in all countries from which furred animals are obtained; the most humane may wear furs to-day with an easy conscience.

As for the trapper himself, he is undoubtedly the individual upon whom the whole trade depends for a continued supply of furs. He is most active from late in October until the end of the winter. He is not a very well-paid servant for the risk he runs, and the amount of work he is called upon to do, to say nothing of the hardships he endures.

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The leading companies adopt a method whereby certain animals are trapped in given districts, and, in order to avoid extermination of a breed, the same districts are tapped at appointed intervals. These intervals permit the animals to breed and multiply.

In handling the goods the various companies usually do them up into small packages, after the pelts have been removed from the animals.

They are, in many cases, nailed out and allowed to dry in the open. The small packages are placed on canoes, which carry them to the companies' ships. The larger companies possess their own vessels.

CHAPTER II

ADVANCE OF THE FUR TRADE (*contd.*)

THOSE furs which reach us from Australia differ from skins which come from other parts of the world. They boast of a distinctive type of their own, which is always readily recognised. This is demonstrated by the differentiation in type between the opossum and rabbit found in Australia and those found elsewhere. The animals are very peculiar in a good many cases. In some instances they are a combination of mammal and bird.

The opossum, platypus, wallaby and kangaroo are included in the finest furs coming from the Antipodes.

New Zealand also supplies a considerable number of furs, the rabbit found there being similar in type to that of Australia.

Japan contributes towards the markets in the shape of foxes, weasels, badgers, martens, bears, hares, wild dogs and cat skins. On the adjoining islands we get the fox, sea-otter, the land otter, and the fur seal abounds on the rocky islets around. Deer skins are also procured from Japan in large quantities. The goods are offered to a very great extent in fairs (see page 10).

• The Chinese are expert dressers of skins, and we obtain from them large quantities already dressed. The type of animal found in China is not of the best, but millions of foxes, hares, rabbits, goats, lamb, kolinsky, racoon and cat skins, besides great numbers of squirrels are exported annually. Marmots abound.

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and the finest tigers in the world are found in China. Large numbers of furs reach China from Siberia on their way to Europe. The superior furs found in China such as the otter, sable and marten are rarely exported, being used by the Chinese themselves.

Various fur-bearing animals are found in Africa, both large and small types inhabiting this continent. The weather, however, is not conducive to the production of good furs from the furrier's standpoint. In a good many cases the quality is quite fair, but the underhair is very loose, the animal not needing the same close underhair covering as that of the Siberian species.

The animals found include the fox, genet, civet cat, otter, leopard, bear and many types of rabbit, as well as monkeys. The qualities are good, but the skins are not very durable. At the present time lions are found from Algeria to Cape Colony.

Europe, apart from Russia, supplies us with numerous furs, including red foxes, polecats, stone martens, baum martens, black and coloured cats, wild cats, otters, rabbits, moles, grebe and swan skins. France and Belgium produce the finest rabbit skins.

Skins arrive in London consigned to the various warehousemen, prominent among whom are Messrs. C. M. Lampson. The business integrity of this firm has won the confidence of the commercial world. Furriers owe a debt of gratitude to Messrs. C. M. Lampson & Co. for the effective manner in which they have contributed to the development of the fur industry in this country. They have succeeded in resisting the efforts of foreign competitors to wrest from England the fur market of the world. Messrs. A. & W.

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Nesbitt, Ltd., and also Messrs. Frederick Huth & Co. are warehousemen of high repute. Many other warehousemen deserve commendation; it is of fundamental importance that implicit confidence can be reposed in them. The goods are offered by auction by the brokers. Buyers from all parts of the world assemble here when the sales take place in January, April and October. They have the effect of giving each particular skin its market value which it retains as a basis until the next sale, providing, of course, that nothing unusual occurs in the market to alter it.

Buyers in purchasing goods place a great deal of confidence in the warehousemen themselves, who receive the goods in the first instance, and, actually handle them for the purpose of sorting. This is fully gone into under the heading of "Sorting," page 23.

Should a purchaser require skins which are put up in, say, lots comprising 2,000 skins, the warehouseman selects a representative bundle of twenty-five specimens (which have been previously removed as selling samples), and it is on these that the bid is made at the auction. The purchaser is generally confident that the twenty-five skins in question represent as nearly as possible the bulk of the goods.

Fairs

In former times when the means of transport were very difficult, prospective buyers of skins would assemble in certain known districts in order to make their purchases, which they usually carried away with them. This practice had grown to such an extent that formerly established fairs were held at

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well-known towns, of which the most important was the Mackary Fair held at Nijni-Novgorod, which began in August and ended in September of each year.

Duties were payable to the Government on goods which were bought at these fairs; the opening of the fairs is attended by the ecclesiastical authorities.

Nijni-Novgorod has been famous for its fairs for many hundreds of years, and it is said that some 250,000 visitors, composed of merchants, assemble regularly at the sales.

The furs offered at such sales are collected from all parts of the world and include the cheapest and best varieties. The London furrier seeks his squirrels particularly at the Nijni-Novgorod fairs. Other well-attended fairs take place at Irbbit and Leipsig at different periods in the year.

The Kietka Fair is one in which the Chinese element is very marked.

The practice of exchanging wares from trinkets to silks which was extensively carried out in past years is now rapidly becoming obsolete, although it is even nowadays indulged in to a certain extent.

The goods which are offered at these fairs are exhibited in warehouses and are inspected during the day by intending purchasers who ultimately conclude their bargains at a dinner, which is usually considered an important feature of the day's proceedings.

A most cosmopolitan crowd assembles at these fairs, consisting of busy merchants, dealers, brokers, etc., of every kind.

Fairs are also held at less important towns in Russia and Germany.

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The College Hill sale rooms in London are considered to be the centre of the fur industry, and the sales conducted here are well attended by buyers from all parts of the world. The extent of these sales often exceeds six figures. They take place about January, April and October of each year, when a very fine selection of furs is offered, among which are included the trappings of the Hudson Bay districts.

The sales are conducted in a most methodical manner, thousands of pounds worth of goods being knocked down to buyers within a few moments.

The basis of current market prices is fixed by the figures paid for goods at these sales, each broker issuing to the furriers his report as to the rise or fall of any particular skin.

• CHAPTER III

CLIMATIC CONDITIONS

It is a well-known fact, so naturalists tell us, that climatic conditions have an effect upon the quality, size and colour of fur-bearing animals, and the Author has therefore included this subject in his work, as he deems it essential that a worker should be familiar with more than merely understanding the cutting and working. He should be acquainted with the causes of the variations of the pile, size and shade, and this knowledge should create for him a greater interest in his work.

The physical condition of animals is affected by the amount of exercise they indulge in, as can be readily understood, and it therefore follows that animals trapped in the regions of the poles, where they are obliged to traverse wide tracts of land in search of food, are likely to be of a larger build.

Nature has gifted those animals of colder regions with a very warm coat. Similarly those living at higher levels possess coats of a fuller pile. The exception, however, arises when a very severe winter causes a scarcity of food, the result being that the coat of the animal is impoverished. The squirrel is a case in point. This animal, during a severe winter will take cover in the bark of a tree, where it remains, and thus its coat is not permitted to grow to its fullest extent.

The changes in the coat take place in the autumn; when all animals are given a heavy outer covering to

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carry them through the winter. The shedding of the hairs commences in the early spring, so that for the summer months, the animal has a much thinner coat.

The poorer qualities, which are usually summer or half-season specimens (those which already have their summer coat or are shedding the winter one) are of a bluish tint on the pelt. This is due to the fact that nature has already prepared the pores of the skin for free perspiration. These skins are particularly dealt with under the heading of "Dressing."

Skins are never improved by exposure to the sun, as it has an injurious effect upon them, both when the animal is alive and in the state in which the furrier handles them. The Russian sable is a very good instance of this. The best specimens come from dense forests where the sun never penetrates; the result is that the finest coloured sables are obtained from those parts of the world. The ermine turns yellow as a result of exposure to the air and sun. It was once suggested that electrolytic treatment might suitably counteract the rays of the sun and so remove the discoloration of the skin. This has been tried but has not proved successful.

Naturalists inform us that, generally speaking, animals found near the Equator are darker in shade, while those from the Polar regions are lighter. There are, however, exceptions, as in the case of the beaver, which proves to be of the darker shade when trapped in Canada; those coming from parts nearer the Equator are much lighter in colour.

The surroundings of snow have the effect of making a skin whiter and clearer in colour; this proves a

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gift of Nature to the animal, as its form is not so easily discerned by its enemies.

It also enables it to obtain its food, as its figure is likewise rendered almost invisible to its prey. As an instance, the fox, which is white during the winter, feeds on a species of bird known as the ptarmigan, and is able to swoop down upon the bird unperceived. Again, the white bear of the polar regions is able to creep unobserved up to the seal and feed on the flesh.

Though not, perhaps, coming strictly under climatic conditions, the coats of amphibious animals should also be mentioned. In addition to the ordinary coat of the skin, silvery hairs are a characteristic of such animals.

CHAPTER IV

THE VALUE OF SKINS

THE market value of a skin is naturally decided by the supply and demand. Nevertheless the high prices reached during the years 1915 to 1918 have proved that the fur products are so essential to a woman's dress that the inflated prices have freely been paid.

So far as value is concerned, skins may be grouped in three classes. The first class of furs, comprising the choicest skins, such as members of the marten family, commands high prices at all times according to the market. This is due not only to the fact that these skins are comparatively scarce, but that they are invariably fine specimens. They give lasting wear and are soft, silky and beautiful in appearance.

The medium class of fur, of which the opossum may be taken as a good example, consists of those skins which do not possess the same degree of durability and quality. The appearance of these skins is naturally not so fine as that of the higher grade.

Lastly, the poor class of furs, which may be easily recognised in appearance. These are not so silky and look harsher; again, they are not so durable.

During the last twenty years great fluctuations in prices have taken place (with allowances during the War). These are attributed in the main to the added uses to which skins have been put.

The scarcity of a skin, the world-wide demand and the prevailing fashion are the points which will naturally

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influence the market value. Those with experience in the fur trade have often discovered a new use to which a skin may be put, with the result that the demand for that particular skin has increased considerably. This, of course, has had the effect of inflating its current price.

Such a demand might often originate abroad, and English merchants, on appreciating this, have been known to return skins to their place of origin in order to fetch a better price.

By "added uses" the writer infers that possibly the application of a newly-discovered dye produces a better imitation of the real thing than was formerly the case. This would, of course, cause a greater demand and consequently an increased value.

The causes for the scarcity of a skin may be classified under two headings. An animal is sometimes recklessly trapped, with the result that extermination is likely to ensue. This often causes a ban to be put on the trapping of certain animals for a prescribed period, so that they may be permitted to multiply and breed freely.

That careless trapping is likely to make an animal extinct is proved by the fact that the beaver is now extinct in this country, which was certainly due to excessive trapping.

Scarcity may also occur, even if a plentiful supply of skins is at hand, according to the extent of a world-wide demand, which will, of course, influence the market value.

The world's demand will again depend upon the prevailing fashion. The fashion of the day might decree that brown furs be worn and the demand for

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such would increase. The same might occur if black or white furs came into vogue.

The fashion, in turn, is influenced also by that prevailing in allied trades, such as cloth coats, or a fantastically shaped fur article which goes well with the dress of the day.

Again, the value of a skin deteriorates if the colour is not good, even though the quality be of the finest. The instance of a sable may be taken. A really fine skin should be dark, good sized and free from any blemishes, also of good quality and of a silky nature. Those that do not include the above points are not considered the best specimens. Ermines should be good in quality and clear in colour. They should not have any yellowness, except for a narrow streak in the belly of the skin. The broadtail should possess the smallest growth of hair possible, and an elaborate watered design. It should be free from holes or blemishes.

The value of a skin, so far as the colour is concerned, is often influenced by what the fashion calls for at the moment. As an instance, the silver fox to-day which has a dark head with a general sprinkling of silver hairs in the lower parts of the skin is that which is considered the best. A few years ago, however, the silver fox very much in demand was one without silver hairs.

A farmed fox—one poorer in texture with silver hairs—is another kind which is seen on the market at the present day. Some few years ago, on the other hand, these foxes were very scarce.

The above demonstrations will show that the value of skins will greatly depend upon the fashion.

THE VALUE OF SKINS .

The value of a skin also depends upon the use to which it may be put. A buyer who wishes to purchase foxes for taping usually seeks the fox with a thick undergrowth and is ready to pay for this, whilst to the purchaser who does not put the fox skin to that use it is of less value. A further demonstration may be given in the case of musquash.

In this case if the skins are to be utilised for seal musquash, the original colour will not make any material difference, since they have to be dyed.

During the past few years owing to shortage of transport as well as a world shortage of skins, the prices of all skins have become inflated. Not many years ago, however, on account of the fashion altering or perhaps the replacement of one skin by another to serve the same purpose, great decreases in value of some skins were experienced.

CHAPTER V

MODES

THE fur trade has grown by leaps and bounds until to-day it is certainly one of the most important in the world of fashion.

Twenty years have seen a great advance in the styles and vogues of the trade, and these have had the effect of fostering and strengthening the industry. One decade ago all that was seen was a tie, consisting of one or two skins sewn together in quite an ordinary manner, or a coat, usually short in length, or perhaps a cape worked in the simplest and most inartistic manner possible. These garments were undoubtedly, in most cases, worn for the purpose of warmth, which, at that period, was the first and only reason for the utilisation of furs. The number of skins used was generally very small, and the price of such ranged very much lower than is the case nowadays. Some of the skins in use in this country to-day were never used here until recently; on the other hand, skins which formerly were used for coat linings now form the outside of coats. This is chiefly due to the enormous quantity of skins now used by the furrier.

The skill and enterprise of the furrier have altered all this, with the result that nowadays a garment is cut and shaped to the fashion of the day. By so doing he utilises a greater number of skins than was formerly the case, thus aiding in making the appearance of a garment pleasing to the eye. Then, again,

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furs are not only purchased for the sake of warmth, (although this factor is chiefly borne in mind by an intending purchaser) but because they are fashionable and beautiful.

In general, competition and advancement have been such in late years that each furrier, in order to carry on his business successfully, has been saddled with the onus of evolving new methods in the working of his skins. The introduction of a new style or dye means new fashions taking the place of the old ones, and improvements are continually occurring. Combinations of one fur with another are frequently met with, one fur intensifying the beauty of the other. The snowy whiteness of the ermine is further enhanced by being worked with the soft grey of the mole. The rich blackness of seal dyed musquash is relieved by, let us say, beaver or skunk, whilst in the case of the cheaper furs, opossum, foxes, or dyed coney, make for a delightful contrast.

Nowadays furs play such an important part in the wearing apparel of women, that they are even worn during the summer time.

Such a fur might consist of an ermine wrap, while white furs, such as foxes, are introduced for spring and autumn wear.

Furs have become so popular a feature in the world of fashion that both cloth coats and gowns have been adorned by such trimmings.

Out of some thirty-five marketable furs from the point of view of the furrier there are only two or three which are at the height of fashion during the year.

Favoured shapes of the season often influence the

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market value of particular skins, as often the latter cannot be put to the required uses owing to size.

In conclusion, it may be said that the popularity of the fur has soared to such immense heights that, the fashion is not likely to wane. This advance in the fur trade has undoubtedly been fostered by the artistic worker, who is sufficiently conscientious to admire his work for its own sake, and all credit should be accorded to such an artist.

CHAPTER VI

SORTING

RAW skins arrive in this country in what are known as original parcels, and these consist of all qualities coming from one particular district (this does not apply to a house collection). Each parcel is then taken, and these skins carefully sorted by the warehouseman; size, quality and colour being taken into consideration.

They are usually divided into a maximum of five grades of quality, irrespective of size and colour. Each grade is then often divided into two or three shades of colour, ranging from the darkest specimens to the palest. Size is then considered and classified, the smalls and mediums being offered in separate lots.

The extra large skins are also often removed and classified separately.

The skins are now ready to be put into lots and offered for sale. The first quality skins would naturally consist of those of a good size and good quality, as well as the correct colour for the particular skin.

The second quality skins are those not good enough to be included in the premier quality. They are slightly inferior in quality or colour, or are not of the requisite size. These usually comprise the fall or spring skins, and it is owing to the period of the year when they are trapped that their standard is not sufficiently high for them to be classed as first qualities.

Third qualities are, of course, inferior to first and

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second qualities, and would perhaps be discoloured or, according to the skin in question, possess no pile (summer skins).

In certain skins fourth and even fifth classifications are made, in which one expects to find a mixture of extremely poor types. Extra large and large form separate classifications according to quality.

It should be understood that, when a certain number of skins are referred to as "firsts," they are the best of a certain parcel for quality, size and colour. There is no standard of quality, as two parcels are never alike. It should still be understood that warehousemen would not include skins in first lots unless they were of the quality justifying the description.

Often the same qualifications are made in every detail in the largest skins of a parcel as well as in the smallest.

Additional classifications are made in certain skins, such as skunk, in which, besides the above-stated classes, detailed sorting is done of the white stripes which appear in the skin, the value of a skin decreasing if it possesses a larger stripe.

The skins are carefully sorted into lots as above and a sample is drawn of each lot, consisting of, say, twenty-five skins, which represent the bulk.

Buyers in the sale-room are often able to determine the price of the second classification by the price obtained for the first classification.

The method of sorting is a rather trying one, for skins have to be sorted in their natural state and are covered with fat and grease. The qualities of the various skins are firstly detected by the condition of

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the pelt; a clear pelt indicating a good skin. By inserting the hand through the skin, which is often encased, one is easily able to note the growth and colour of the hair, and the experienced sorter would at once know the district from which the skin comes.

A representative sample of the bulk, consisting of some twenty-five skins, is removed. This is termed "drawing the show." It is on this sample that the prospective buyer will make his purchase.

By the above classifications and the knowledge of the district in which the skins are trapped, buyers are usually able to form a fairly correct idea of the class of skin they are bidding for, without actually having seen the bulk of the goods.

In judging skins one should not only examine the quality but also test the pelt in order to see if the skins can be dressed satisfactorily from the point of view of the furrier. This precaution is specially necessary, for parcels are often sold and resold, the skins sometimes becoming stale, making it doubtful as to whether they can be dressed well. In testing such skins one should grip the hair and slightly pull on same without too much strain. If the hair leaves the ground of the skin without difficulty, it may be generally assumed that the skin will not dress. If, on the other hand, the hair is tightly set to the ground of the skin it will seldom give trouble in the dressing.

This may be taken as a general test, but there are other means of determining if the skin will dress well by carefully examining the pelt.

It will be found that white marks and perforations often appear on the pelt of a skin, which show that

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it has been affected by worms. The result of dressing such skins will be very unsatisfactory, as these marks will appear as damages. Skins such as rabbits, wallaby and nutria are classified in many cases by weight per dozen pelts. Under each skin the method of classification as adopted by the leading warehouseman in each particular skin is given. In the case of Chinese skins such as thibet, kid, rabbits and goats, these are received here in the dressed form. They are comprised of more original parcels than most, parcels of raw skins. For this reason bulk is always offered, not samples. The bales or cases containing Chinese goods are clearly marked with lettering, denoting the shipper. Prospective buyers attach great importance when purchasing to find the shipment.

Treatment of Raw Skins

The manner in which fur-bearing animals are skinned may prove of interest to the reader. The skin is cut from the tail down the centre of the belly to the jaw, after which it is carefully removed from the body of the animal and spread out flat. It is then nailed on boards, fur side inwards. Such skins which are stretched flat and nailed are known in the fur trade as "open skins." "Cased" skins are those which are simply cut on either side of the tail and stripped off the dead animal. These skins in order to be dried are placed on specially-constructed boards, which vary in size according to the particular skin in question.

The reason why some skins are removed in one way and some in another is that in the manufacturing of certain fur skins they are more satisfactorily handled

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when "open." Others, again, give better results when they are dealt with in the closed state.

The skins which are usually "opened" are seals, chinchilla, beaver, nutria, moles, bears, marmots, Persian and all Chinese skins. Other skins than these are usually cased.

Distinctive Marks

Most skins in their raw state are often marked with distinctive signs to indicate their place of origin. These marks sometimes consist of the manufacturer's or owner's initials or trade marks and very often prove a valuable clue when batches of skins are stolen or go astray.

Dressers and dyers are also in the habit of imprinting their marks on the leather side of the skin.

The Hudson Bay Company, for instance, make use of quite a number of different marks which at once show to one cognizant of them where a particular animal was trapped. Below is given a list of some of the signs employed by this Company, the initials, as will be seen, standing for the place of origin of their trappings.

When skins are catalogued for sale by auction, the above marks are often mentioned, thus enabling prospective buyers to know the character of the skins which are being offered.

Marks

Canada	The older section of Canada.
N.W.	North-Western section.
Y.F.	Yorkfort on Hudson's Bay at the mouth of the Nelson River.
E.M.	East Main, east of Hudson's Bay in Labrador.

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- E.B. Esquimo Bay, on the north shore of the St. Lawrence River in the Company's old trading district, known as the Montreal Department.
- M.K.R. Mackenzie River, in the North-West, extending from the Rocky Mountains to the Arctic Ocean.
- G.R. George's River.
- M.R. Moose River, in the North-West, south-west of Hudson's Bay.
- B. & M. Bersimis and Mingan, posts in Canada, north of the Gulf of St. Lawrence.
- F.G. Fort Gerry.
- L.W.R. Little Whale River, in Labrador, emptying into Hudson's Bay.
- G.W.R. Great Whale River.
- Y.T. Yukon Territory.

CHAPTER VII

DRESSING

THE dressing industry, which is a very old one in this country, was largely practised here many years ago. It was, however, not encouraged sufficiently, with the result that Germany of recent years had been extending her dressing works and, up to 1914, undoubtedly reached a very high standard of perfection. The peculiar properties found in the waters of Germany together with the addition of chemicals made the dressing of the country unequalled in smaller skins, whilst England excelled in the larger variety, skins being sent here from the Continent for dressing.

In England saw-dust, salt water and grease have been the only materials used in dressing by most dressers. The inclusion of alum, sulphuric acid, peroxide of hydrogen, acetic acid, etc., which are now being used in the process of dressing are chemicals which have only recently been added over here.

The quantities, time of application, and changes owing to exposure have yet, however, to be discovered. At the time of writing, in fact, we have good reasons for believing that very good progress has been made in that direction. Firms in the past were known to have brought large iron carboys of water from abroad in the hope of obtaining the same perfection of dressing as that obtained on the Continent. When, however, these were opened the qualities which rendered

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the water so helpful deteriorated. There is a vast field here for the exploration of the chemist, many dressing secrets have yet to be discovered, and it is only by research and experimenting in a united manner that these problems may be solved.

The danger of chemicals interfering with the ultimate dyeing of the skin is another consideration which must be borne in mind.

In quality, as well as price, Germany was supreme. It is common knowledge that the larger the quantities in the dresser's hands, the cheaper the expense of dressing them. In former years all countries were in the habit of sending large quantities of skins to be dressed into that country, and this had the result of furthering the industry.

The war of 1914-1918, however, made it obligatory for the furriers of this country to patronise the English dresser, who, under forced conditions, has certainly made wonderful strides in reviving the industry here. It is therefore obvious that, if in the future the English dressing trade receives the same patronage as the German did formerly, it should be able to quote nearly as low a price for its work as that ruling in Germany. The Chinese, as well as skin dressers of India and Africa, use pumice-stone and arsenic for their work, the stone being used in the place of a fleshing knife, whilst the arsenic prevents the skin hardening.

• The dressing of skins in the fur trade plays a very important part, for when the skin is handed to the dresser it is greasy, fleshy and hard. It is his duty to carefully dress the skin, and great discretion is called for on his part, in exposing the skin occasionally

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to a longer process in one case than in another. Again, some skins require a particular process repeated more often than others. This, again, is a matter which must be left to the knowledge of the dresser.

In order to deal as fully as possible with all the branches of dressing we will take the following processes in turn, bringing us from the raw state of the skin to a state fit for manufacture.

1. Salt water liquoring—a process which softens and cleanses the skin.

2. Skins are placed in a "Hydro." This frees the skin from the salt water.

3. "Drumming." The skins are put into a drum containing sawdust. This process has the effect of cleansing.

4. "Caging." They are placed in cages to be freed from sawdust picked up in Process No. 3.

5. "Fleshing." The superfluous matter on the pelt is removed in this process.

6. Drying. This is done in a hot room by means of steam.

7. "Leathering." An application of grease to the skin for the purpose of forming a leather.

8. "Drumming." As above.

9. "Caging." As above.

10. Stretching and Cleansing. Re-cleansing when necessary.

11. "Drumming."

12. "Caging."

13. Beating.

14. Combing. (When necessary.)

The skins in their raw state may be divided into

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two classes, viz., the 'close-grained and the open-grained. Among the close-grained skins are the following: sable, ermine, marmot and skunk, and skins of this type. The open-grained skins consist of the following: fox, wolf, bear, etc., etc. It is possible to divide these skins in the above manner if they are winter skins. Among the list of close-grained skins, the summer skins have the pores open, the result of the animal's perspiring, and these therefore would be treated as open-grained skins. The summer skin can be distinguished by the dark-blue shade on the pelt side instead of a white shade which is found in the winter skin. A full piled skin usually possesses a thin pelt, whilst a thin haired skin has, in most cases, a thick pelt.

Process No. 1.—The first process of "Liquoring" is applied to all skins. This process must be split up into two classes.

Skins which are fatty and fleshy should be "tanked." In this operation they are placed into tanks containing salt water, which has the effect of opening the pores and softening the skin. At the same time the skin is freed from grease. This operation will extend over a period of about twenty-four hours; should the skins, however, be exceptionally greasy, thick, or of very heavy pelts, a longer period may be found necessary.

In the case of summer skins "tanking" is not necessary. The skins are damped with salt water by hand and allowed to remain for some twenty-four hours.

Process No. 2.—When skins have been "tanked" they are placed into a hydro, which frees the skins

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from water. The hydro machine consists of a large iron cylindrical bath containing a perforated basin, which revolves at thousands of revolutions a minute, the speed depending upon size of hydro. This has the effect of relieving the skins of superfluous water, which is thrown into the larger bath and out through a vent pipe. Skins possessing a woolly undergrowth should be washed with soap water, a tub being used to carry out this process. Rabbits and ring-tailed opossum give good examples of what are termed "woolly skins."

Process No. 3.—From the hydro the skins are taken to large drums, about 10 ft. in diameter. These drums contain sawdust and revolve very slowly. Steps are fitted inside the drum, which break the fall of the skins. These should be allowed to remain in the drum from one to two hours. After this period has elapsed they become softened and ready for caging.

Process No. 4.—The object of caging is to free the skins from sawdust used in Process No. 3. A protected wire cage with 1-in. mesh is used. This allows the sawdust to leave the cage when in motion. Skins are left in the cage from a quarter of an hour to one hour, after which time they should be practically free from all dust. The sawdust used generally consists of oak, beech or birch dust, or any other hard, light coloured woods.

Process No. 5.—The skins are now ready for the operation of "Fleshing." This particular branch of the dressing trade is considered the most skillful of all. Each skin receives a further immersion in salt water by the "flesher" extending over several hours.

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in order to make it pliable, and is then ready for the actual operation of fleshing.

Every skin is passed across the fleshing knife, which is placed in position to suit the "flesher" and is supported by two iron beaks attached to a post. The skin passes across the knife, leather towards the blade, and the superfluous flesh is removed. Of recent years this process has been carried out by machines, which, however, have proved efficient only with certain skins. The blade of this machine revolves at 1,500 revolutions a minute. Although machine work it should be done by capable workers with experience.

Process No. 6.—The skins are then taken to a drying-room where they are perfectly dried. The drying process should be carried out steadily as the skins are liable to be burnt by too rapid drying. The drying room is heated by means of steam, each skin being placed across a bar separately in order that every part of the skin is thoroughly dried.

Process No. 7.—At this stage of dressing the skins are practically in their original condition, *minus* flesh, and are very hard. It will therefore be found necessary to soften the skins before leathering is proceeded with. An application of salt water will once more open the pores, so that these are ready to accept the grease, which will give each skin its leather. Seal oil and tallow are rubbed into the skins by hand. Each skin is handled separately and thoroughly stretched in order that the grease shall pass into the pores. This is especially necessary for skins which undergo the process of dyeing. A liberal application of grease will permit the hot dye to penetrate the skins much better. If this operation be carefully carried out, the

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skins will become pliable and fit for use. It is at this stage of the dressing that the chemicals referred to earlier are applied. The object is to obtain the best leather possible, and each dresser applies his own particular chemical, a little secret known only to himself. The effect of the dressed article is undoubtedly decided, at this stage, success depending upon the chemical applied. It is then placed into leathering machines, which do the required work.

Formerly leathering took place in the following fashion: The skins were trodden under foot. A "Tubber" would enter a large puncheon and tread the skins with bare feet, which produced a leather on the pelt. To make this method more efficient it was deemed necessary for the man to be nude from below the waist. This, however, was considered very degrading, and machines generating heat by friction are now adopted.

The machine used for this purpose has not yet reached a high standard of efficiency and it is still found necessary to carry out the treading of certain tender skins, such as moles, by the old-time process.

An examination of each skin should take place, and any that require further treatment should be re-greased and replaced into the machine. A repetition of this cannot be avoided sometimes as some skins need more greasing than others.

Process No. 8.—After being leathered and thoroughly stretched, the skins are put into drums with new sawdust. In this process the skins are turned pelt outward. By allowing the pelt to remain so for the

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period of one hour or more, each skin becomes free from unnecessary grease and is cleansed.

Process No. 9.—In order to free the skins further of sawdust, they are placed back into the cage for about three-quarters of an hour.

Process No. 10.—Each skin must now be treated individually so far as stretching and cleaning is concerned. In carrying out the latter process a comb is passed through the skin, after which it is beaten and generally looked to. It will often be found that many skins need re-cleaning. For this purpose they are placed into the drum and then "caged," and should, after further beating and combing, be perfectly ready.

The above processes are the usual order of procedure, excepting in the case of skins with little fat or flesh. In this case the leathering is carried out first and the fleshing afterwards. This would, of course, make the flesher's work easier.

Among the skins which improve when being worked in the length, the skunk, mink and kolinsky are fair specimens.

These are roped, the object being to give an improved appearance to the skin. They are drawn across a rope in the wet state, after being leathered, which has the effect of binding the hairs more closely together, making the skin longer and narrower, as well as superior in appearance and quality. This process is a most trying one.

In the case of larger skins, such as bears, beavers, leopards and tigers; fleshing cannot be done by means of the ordinary fleshing knife. These are cut down in the raw state, leathered as other skins, and are shaved

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by means of a currier's knife, as is used in the leather trade.

Unhairing

The process of unhairing is often resorted to in the case of skins possessing longer top hairs purely for the purpose of improving the general appearance of such skins. The types of skins which usually undergo this process are seals, otters, beavers and nutrias. These possess a growth of hair which is pulled, leaving the undergrowth. In such cases the pile becomes much shorter and closer.

The musquash at one time used to undergo this treatment. This was, of course, before the introduction of shearing machines, which are now extensively used for this skin as well as for others.

When skins are required to be "unhaired," a mechanic who thoroughly understands his business is specially necessary for this work.

In the first place the skins are put into a hot room, each type of skin requiring a different temperature. It is for this particular reason that a thoroughly skilled man is essential. If skins were subjected to a higher temperature than is required, burning would, of course, ensue. After being exposed to the heat for a certain period (which has also to be gauged accurately), they are placed on what is termed the "unhairing block." This consists of the trunk of a tree, some 18 in. in diameter, which has been levelled to form a smooth work-table. The actual unhairing of skins should take place while they are still hot. The top hairs are drawn from the roots of the skin, so that the under-growth is unaffected.

After all superfluous hairs have been removed the

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skins undergo the process of dressing in all its details.

In the last stage of dressing, when a separate examination of each skin takes place, any superfluous hairs which may be noticed should be plucked.

The process of unhairing is practised in this country with very good results. This is facilitated by the fact that the waters here are particularly suited for this purpose. Dressers in America experience difficulty as the waters there are quite unsuitable. It is the first process of dipping the skin into water which loosens the superfluous hairs, and it is essential that these be drawn from the roots.

CHAPTER VIII

DYEING

Of the ancient industrial arts dyeing dates back to the early Babylonian period. The manufacture and use of synthetic dyes have undergone rapid developments in this country as well as on the Continent during the past few years. Dyes used for furs may, broadly speaking, be classified under two headings, viz. : (1) natural dye-stuffs, *e.g.*, those of vegetable or animal origin ; (2) artificial dye-stuffs, *e.g.*, those made by the chemist. Great experience is needed in using the specific dye most suitable for a particular purpose. .

The natural dye-stuffs differ from those obtained from chemicals in the limitation of their range of shades ; the former are secured by appropriate extraction, such as, in madder and indigo from their respective plants, sepia from a species of cuttle-fish, and cochineal red from the well-known insect.

The developments referred to in the opening paragraphs of this section relate more particularly to artificial dye-stuffs. Of these the aniline dyes which were extensively used in Germany owe their origin to Perkin, an English professor of chemistry. . A wide range of colours can be secured by the suitable synthetic processes ; aniline, the parent substance from which this series of dye-stuffs is derived, is a by-product in the distillation of coal-tar.

The best aniline dyes will not wash out, are fast, and when applied impregnate the fabric of the article

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dyed. The superposition of pigments on furs is a process distinct from dyeing.

Skins are dyed in various shades, and most countries possess their own speciality in this respect. The waters of certain countries have a better effect upon a particular dye than those of other countries, and the result is that one country might turn out a better example of the same dye than another, as a consequence of this fact. But undoubtedly dyeing has not hitherto been encouraged to a very great extent in England, although we still have the monopoly of certain dyes, goods coming often from abroad to be dyed by us.

There are various competitive firms of dyers whose success undoubtedly is due to the fact that they specialize to improve the effect of a number of dyes and so bring them nearer to perfection.

In the past, the English fur trade has mostly looked to the Continent for its dyeing requirements.

France in the past has been noted for her seal, musquash and rabbit dyes, which were always at the height of perfection; America excelled in the seal skin dye.

The recent advancement in England, however, has been very rapid, and at the moment we are well on the heels of our continental competitors.

So far as fur-dyeing is concerned, the Germans specialised in Persians and foxes. The Belgians were well known for their black dyes, specially in rabbit skins.

The secrets of the dyeing industry both here and abroad have always been most closely guarded. Even if one were able to obtain the ingredients for

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making a certain dye, he could very seldom, if ever, secure the conditions essential to success.

Successful dyeing involves delicate manipulation: for some thousands of experiments often have to be made before a satisfactory result is obtained.

It may be mentioned in passing that the ingredients of a well-known brown dye which is commonly used are: copper dust, camphor, antimony and gall-nuts (which are specially treated).

The skins are thrown into large tanks and are manoeuvred with long poles. This process is repeated, as the skins always require to be impregnated with the dye.

Articles which have to be dyed black are put into tanks containing principally logwood, and, after having been exposed to the air, are known to take the dye very well. Seals are nailed flat to a board, and as many as twelve applications are made without darkening the pelt.

Another procedure in process of dyeing is what is termed in the trade as "topping" of skins. In such cases the skin is brushed with the dye, thus changing the colour of the skin's surface but leaving the undergrowth of the skin unaffected. This is often applied to the sable pile, with the object of making the yellowish skin appear dark. These skins would lose much of their beauty if dipped in dye tubs; careful touching with a small brush in a delicate manner is therefore resorted to. Skins that have faded in wear can also be treated in this manner with success.

The silvering of skins, which is done by means of an application of sulphuric acid, has the effect of giving

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the coat a silvery lustre, which adds considerably to its beauty.

The war of 1914-1918 has done much to improve the dyeing industry in this country, partly because of the temporary stoppage of imports, and also because we have now realised the importance of this particular industry, as applied to textiles, furs, feathers, etc., and, as a consequence, the dyeing industry here has seen very great changes during the past four or five years.

CHAPTER IX

MATCHING AND PLACING OUT

MATCHING and the placing out of skins play a very important part in the appearance of a garment, and are therefore great factors in the success of its manufacture. Each skin should be first beaten, and the worker should have in mind the exact position it will occupy.

The surface and underground of a skin should be carefully studied, and when instances occur where skins appear to match only as far as the surface is concerned, but not in the case of the underground, the cutter should avoid pairing such skins. He should bear in mind, when working a skin, that those which possess a lighter ground will show up much more, as in working the ground lifts. Where, in the first instance, the surface of skins appear to match, it is probable that in the finished state those peats, when laid side by side and compared, a difference may be detected.

We learn by experience how various types of skins should be viewed. As an example, in the case of sable or skunk, the examination for the purpose of matching should be made from a raised position. A platform is often used for this purpose. By looking well into the pile from an elevated position one is able to discern the various colourings more satisfactorily. In the case of mole matching this is carried out with the skins on a level with the eye and the hair running crosswise. The reason why different methods are

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employed in matching is because, in some instances, for example, mole, the skin has a tendency to glisten. This difficulty is overcome if the skin is viewed crosswise.

In the case of all long-haired furs, such as sable, skunk, etc., a careful view from a raised position permits one to examine not only the surface, but also the underground.

It is, of course, obvious that the ultimate use to which skins will be put will greatly help in the matching, as size in addition to similarity must be taken into consideration.

When a round article two skins wide is made, it may be of assistance to the worker if he secures smaller skins for the inside, as this may save an enormous amount of work in the cutting. Furthermore, a slightly defective skin may be used to advantage in such a case, and an experienced cutter should be able to overcome any little difficulty by placing such a skin in an unobtrusive part.

Again, lighter skins have to be used quite often in conjunction with darker skins, and this is another reason why the duty of matching should devolve upon the cutter of the article, for he is often able to place the various shadings in a position least noticeable. It is essential that a man who possesses a good knowledge of matching should be capable of securing the requisite number of skins from the smallest number handed to him. For instance, if an ermine article is required to be made from forty skins, the matcher should be quite capable of securing this number from two timbers of forty skins each. He should certainly not find it necessary to open

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three or four timbers in such a case. A better match may be obtained by removing a portion of yellow side. On the other hand, an addition of yellow side may be used to advantage.

In the working of certain skins which are bundled $1x$, $2x$ and $3x$, the same number of one's and three's should be used, and any remaining skins should either consist of the $2x$'s or the same amount of one's and three's. This would facilitate the matching of these same bundles on the next occasion.

A cutter when matching should consider whether he can utilise one particular skin with another by splitting, thus obtaining equality in each of the two skins. The procedure would be to split the skins, and join half of one skin with half of the other.

Skins which are chosen for an article should be carefully examined, and any defective portions taken into consideration; if a fine skin is chosen for a prominent part, but possesses certain damages which would require complicated work to repair, the cutter should judge such a skin by what he deems would be its effect on the appearance of an article when it has been freed from damage.

Another point which should be borne in mind by the matcher is the over-lapping of seams which may be resorted to and should prove of assistance in the matching.

In general it should be remembered that the ultimate use to which skins are put should be considered in the matching, for this will assist the cutter in his arrangement of the pelts.

Quite often skins which possess a slightly different shade may be worked into an article if a cutter is

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previously aware that the hair of such skins is to flow in another direction in the completed garment. The flounce of a coat may be taken as a good example of this. In such a case the skins would not run continuously from the coat into the flounce, as in the latter they would most likely occupy a horizontal position, whilst in the body of the coat they are placed vertically. The eye would not therefore detect the different shades of the skins at the same moment. It should be noted that all skins "shade" to a certain extent.

It should be understood that the above hints are given as they may prove of help to the worker, but are not essential.

The cutter should always plan his skins on the pattern before any work is commenced, as he will thus often be enabled to utilise small skins in place of large ones and generally do his work in a more satisfactory manner.

Although not recommended, the tinting of skins by means of chemicals in solid or liquid form is practised by the better furrier as certain parts often require such an application. This should always be done with extreme caution.

Lastly, the matcher should bear in mind the three important factors: quality, colour and size. Other points will be found on this subject under the various skins dealt with.

CHAPTER X

CUTTING

THE evolution of time has seen changes in the world of manufacture, but none more in any trade than in that of furs. Fifteen to twenty years ago insignificant furs were worn, but these, indeed, did not play such an important rôle in Milady's dress as they do to-day. The skill and world-wide enterprise of the furrier, however, have altered this, and the furs have now become greatly-prized possessions, and with their beauty and artistic appearance have been accepted as an important feature of the wardrobe.

The worker responsible for this is the "true" furrier, *i.e.*, one who is gifted with an artistic temperament and great powers of discretion, which qualities may always be detected in the finished article.

The fur trade is, indeed, a wonderful business if we bear in mind the fact that the skin in its raw state is oily and greasy, and that the various processes through which the skin passes have the effect of causing such a transformation that the article when complete possesses great beauty and utility. In fact, the whole of the practical side of the trade may be considered as a fine art.

Few people even nowadays realise the great dangers run by trappers in the pursuit of fur-bearing animals and that each skin when it reaches the manufacturer has a little history attached to it!

Manual labour is sometimes displaced by machine

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in many branches of the fur trade but not so in the case of cutting, the reason being that standard cuts are never applicable, each skin being treated in its own particular way. As my predecessor, Mr. Kuttner of the Northampton Polytechnic, once said, "A furrier is an apprentice all his life ; he is always finding something more difficult to overcome than has previously come his way."

It is the Author's intention in the following paragraphs to make the reader acquainted with the various principles, hints and suggestions which have been acquired by him during his varied practical experience in the fur trade. In doing so, however, he does not wish any particular class of worker to take umbrage at his words, but to realise that he is solely prompted by the best motives.

His opinions are based on the fact that, having conducted his own factory, he is conversant with the points which go to the making of a first-class worker. Having also had to inspect and pass the deliveries of out-door workers he is able to look immediately for particular defects, which would not seem of sufficient importance in the workroom ; while lastly, in the offering of goods for sale, he wishes to point out that one is again faced with criticism of a different kind, which often brings to the surface a lack of discretion on the part of the worker.

• There are two classes of cutters—the one whose main object from the outset is to complete his work in the quickest way, irrespective of its final appearance, and second, the craftsman who considers his art first and who will not on any account be hustled or permit himself through lack of time to evade any

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particular method in working which goes to make the perfect garment.

One is easily able to recognise the former type of worker, for, in presenting himself for a berth, he is armed with a knife and feels that this constitutes all his necessary equipment. Half the remaining tools which are required he will borrow from his fellow-workers, while the other half he dispenses with. Unfortunately during the years 1914-1918, owing to lack of labour, many examples of this type of cutter could be found in the trade and they have considerably increased in numbers. These workers usually fail to realise the importance of appearing clean and tidy in their working attire and surroundings.

This type of cutter will usually attribute his lack of good results to the fact that the skins he works are not of sufficiently good quality. One need hardly add that this particular kind of worker is a source of injury to a business and proves a veritable *bête-noir* to the principal of a firm.

The artistic worker, on the other hand, finds he requires a number of tools, such as several knives, so that he need not stop on each occasion to sharpen the knife he is using, a pair of shears—useful in certain branches of work for clipping edges—a foot-rule, a diagonal square, a chalk bag for Vandyking, together with various sizes of Vandyke cuts. Although he is not actually the nailer, he possesses, nevertheless, a pair of pincers, in the event of his assistance being required at the nailing table, a tape-measure, stretching-irons for softening skins that may be hard, combs of various sizes, and, lastly, weights, which will

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enable him to keep the pattern in position when straightening it off.

A cutter who presents himself with such a collection of tools usually gives a prospective employer the impression that he is a first-class worker and is quite *au fait* with his work.

It is obvious to the reader that the real worker in this trade, as well as in others, is he who takes an interest in the work he is handling. He is the individual responsible for establishing the fur trade in France and Germany, for prejudice was not always the reason for a buyer's preference for the continental article to the home-made one. It was the detail studied which made for ultimate good results, and this point always told in the long run!

It should therefore be the aim of every worker to find some more artistic method of working an article, for one may always be able to introduce a new cut which will go further to enhance the beauty of a particular fur he is handling.

It is essential in the cutting of an article that the worker shall take the right mental attitude, so that he does not lose sight of the fact that the appearance on the hair side of the skin is of prime importance, irrespective of what happens to the leather side. That is to say, a cutter should have no objection whatever to work an expensive skin, such as a sable or a fox or any such skins, and feel that his skin must of necessity have elaborate work on the leather side. The writer has known a cutter to revolt at the thought of cutting one of the above-named skins without making a few cuts or drops irrespective of their uses. The man who can obtain the desired

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effects with the fewest cuts is undoubtedly the better workman, for cuts not only tend to displace the natural flow of the hair, but also add seams, which, in turn, take up material and make the article smaller as well as inferior. It should be clearly understood that drops do make articles smaller in size and not larger. The opposite, however, is what is generally understood. When drops are employed, a part of the material is taken from where it is not wanted and worked into another part where it is needed.

A system of working to measure is essential, viz., ten cuts of $\frac{3}{4}$ in. means that the article becomes $7\frac{1}{2}$ in. longer, after taking into consideration the material lost in the sewing. This, however, is not always practised. Cutters will often lengthen the skin more than is necessary and will finally stretch it in the width.

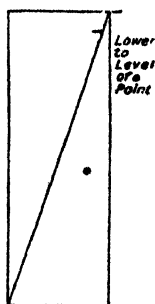


DIAGRAM 1

In lengthening a skin it should be borne in mind that the stripe of a skin is improved by being narrowed. The first downward cut therefore should end at the stripe.

The origin of drops will be clearly seen by the oblong which appears in diagram 1. The downward movement of the diagonal in the diagram shows the principle which any complicated drop follows. Cuts in the length should always be long and tapering, for this will prevent puckering in the material. Cuts for the width should be short and wide, for the same reason.

The cutter with a varied experience in nailing always proves his worth, for he knows exactly how much he may expect of the nailer in stretching.

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Having damped the skins slightly before cutting, he is able to judge exactly how much stretch can be obtained from them, and therefore does not count on more from the nailer, who, if inexperienced, usually makes added work for the cutter in the form of tears.

On beginning operations on any particular skin, the table should be cleared; otherwise fatalities may occur, such as the inadvertent cutting of anything valuable under the pattern. On completion of each class of work a dust-round is essential. This makes for cleanliness, which is absolutely necessary. Pieces which may drop from one skin or another should be carefully collected and laid aside, for much time may be saved if this is done. A cutter on many occasions might otherwise have to spend valuable time in searching for pieces which he requires to finish an article.

The cutter should use his discretion as to when to apply one particular cut of the many which would serve the same purpose. He is often confronted with two or three methods, each proving worse than the other. He should therefore make it his duty to see that the ultimate method he adopts will be open to the least objection. Final results should be weighed up, always bearing in mind that the choice of cuts used should be made with the idea of improving the article when complete.

• Skins generally improve by being stretched in the length, and it is often left to the cutter to work his skin either in this manner or in the width. He should always choose the former when possible. Skins pulled in the length bind the hairs close together, and this adds both to the appearance and quality.

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The following explanation shows how the best results may be reached in the placing together of skins. The first example given is the incorrect method.

Four skins of sable are needed for a muff. It is possible to stretch each two skins in the width on either side of the muff, the heads then being joined. The final result would give a muff of two skins width, stretched in the width. The sable being a skin which would improve by stretching in the length and, furthermore, considering that the beauty of the skin is its stripe, the correct method to apply would be to drop the four skins in question in the length, placing them side by side. The result of this on completion would give us a muff showing four skins, stretched in the length for quality, with four beautiful stripes prominently placed.

Discretion should again be exercised in placing skins together, especially when certain skins have to be forced together for colour. As an instance, one skin may appear fuller than the other two, in the working of a three-skin muff. If the fuller skin be placed in the middle and the two skins on either side, the effect would be a little height in the middle with a gradual decrease on either side, which is not a great objection. On the other hand, if one skin be very much fuller than the other two, it would be advisable to place each half of the one full skin, which is split, to the extreme sides of the muff. On joining the second skin, which has also been split, it will be found possible to lift it, slightly raising it to the height of the first full skin. The third and middle skin is placed intact in the centre.

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In the making of a two-skin muff, in which one skin is larger than the other, the smaller skin, after being split, should be placed in the centre, thus enabling the stripes to be proportionately in the middle of the muff. The extra width of the larger skin is utilised for turning in at the handhole of the muff.

In the making of the three-skin muff, if one skin is slightly darker than the other two, the best effect is usually achieved if the darker skin forms the middle. The object of this is to throw the most beautiful skin to the prominent part of the muff. The lighter skins form the less noticeable sides of the article.

It will be generally understood that it is difficult—even impossible—to lay down any hard and fast rules for the working and placing out of skins. All one is able to do is to give every conceivable instance which may arise and the rest must be left to the cutter, who, as previously mentioned, should know when to employ the correct method.

In working the general run of skins in the trade, one should bear in mind the fact that a skin should be free from all damages before any particular kind of work is begun on it. Skins should be beaten in order to free them from any moths they may contain.

A practice should be adopted of always marking the centre of the skin, for this plays an important part in the nailing of an article, if not in the cutting.

In moving skins in the length or width the position should be clearly marked to enable the machinist to carry out her work efficiently.

Cuts should be clean and not saw-edged, for this is one of the principal means of assisting us to obtain

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a clean seam, which is essential in all branches of the trade.

Among the seams used are the following: The ordinary over-sewing seam, and the Vandyke seam, the purpose of the latter being to distribute the straightness and form irregularities, so lessening the possibilities of the seam showing.

In the writer's opinion the Vandyke seam (diagram 96, page 109) should be used only when a cutter feels that the result will make his seam invisible. Should he feel that the Vandyke seam will show, it is far better not to use it.

Three Vandyke seams are used in the trade. The first is the oldest method of the three and the one most commonly used (diagram 96). The second is a scalloped method which originated in Germany, and was used to a great extent for seal musquash linings; the object in choosing this cut was to avoid one corner in the sewing. The third method is one commonly used in America and avoids all corners by using a cut of waving design.

The Polish seam, when used, lessens any possibility of the ground of the skin showing. This, however, is only used for the purpose of joining heads and is sewn in a Polish fashion. Hence its name. The advantage of this seam is that it has the effect of congregating the hairs and so making a cleaner joint.

Three seams sewn closely together used in the same place and for the same purpose are often resorted to. The above two methods are doubtless a substitute for the dovetail seam and are often adopted for their simplicity.

The dovetail seam is illustrated in diagram 51, page

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138. The first stage consists of the cutting of the skins at intervals, care being taken that in joining the skin the cut in each case ends in the middle of each apportioned part of the first skin. In the second stage, the corners are removed to enable the sewing to be finer. In the third and last stage it will be seen that the skins are locked in a dovetail fashion, the one into the other. This has the effect of binding the hairs very closely together, twice as many hairs being crowded into the same space. Many workers adopt the method of leaving the corners on in the second stage. The argument given is that the corners possess hairs which will add to the effect. If this is done the corners should be worked round in the machine.

It should be the cutter's duty to distribute any objectionable part of a skin whenever possible over a greater area, thus causing it to show less.

In garments where the beauty is displayed by the prominence of each individual skin, such as a squirrel or an ermine, care should be taken that the skins are as nearly as possible of the same size. In skins such as seal musquash, Persian or similar furs, however, uniformity should be studied, so that the impression given is a garment cut from one huge skin.

A cutter should realise that his responsibility covers every branch of the trade, from the time he receives the skin to when the garment is finished, in spite of the fact that he does not participate in every operation the skin undergoes. One of the finest furriers I have met, Mr. J. Ullmer, once said, "Most Cutters Just Cut." For his own satisfaction, therefore, he should make himself acquainted with each process applied to the skin.

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His article should be soft, and in reaching this stage should undergo a rubbing-out process, which is effected before the straightening-off of any article. The reason for this is that it becomes smaller after being rubbed out, and will therefore not fit the pattern if straightening-off takes place first. All seams should be well pressed with a warm iron before being handed to the finisher.

The cutter's responsibility should further lie in the cleaning, setting and perfecting of the article. If, in his opinion, hot sawdust or an application of benzine is necessary, this should be applied.

CHAPTER XI

NAILING

THE art of nailing when acquired is indeed a valuable one, and much credit is certainly due to the individual who invented this art, for without this branch of the work the furrier would undoubtedly not be able to finish his garments so finely, as is at present the case. Little appreciation in the trade generally has been shown to the value of nailing, but the experienced cutter will admit that much of the praise accorded him for the finished article is due to the nailer, who can either make or mar it according to his ability.

Nailers generally enter the fur trade with the idea of eventually becoming cutters, and they are usually then of opinion that nailing is waste of time. It is only when they become perfect workers that they realise that the successful accomplishment of this art is of first-rate importance.

The nailer, who should be accorded much more appreciation than he receives to-day, has the great and important factor of cleanliness to consider, for, although this is also one of the first considerations of the cutter, it is doubly important in the case of the nailer.

The nailer, in handling his article, should carefully damp the leather side, leaving the hair side in all cases as dry as possible. Not only would dampness allow an article to acquire more dust and chalk, but, when stretched, the damp hairs cling to the board

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and thus hinder the worker from obtaining the fullest possible amount of stretch.

In the first place the article is damped and folded, leather to leather. Water should be applied lightly on thinner pelts, whilst on heavier pelts thorough damping even with warm water is resorted to. The board on which the nailing is to be done should be properly cleansed and any adhering chalk from a previous operation removed therefrom. The pattern should be carefully marked, so that the nailer may place his article over it. He should, however, assure himself, before having damped the article, that he is able to obtain the required size without tearing, which is undoubtedly a great failing with many nailers. The article or garment should be pulled gingerly, using the pincers in the harder pelts, whilst in the thinner pelts the hand should be used to manoeuvre the shortage.

The experienced nailer will at once know how much stretch he can obtain from his article, and, if a skilful worker, he will not stretch to such an extent as to cause a tear. In the event of a tear occurring through some unforeseen reason, the article should at once be removed from the board and the rent sewn. The article should be laid across the pattern, and any pulling which takes place should go with the hair and not against, for in the latter case the hair would be dragged against the board. If the skin is, however, stretched with the hair, the skin's softness will usually aid the nailer in the operation, the fur sliding more or less in the direction in which it is pulled.

Nails should be knocked at the extreme edge, for not only do they keep better when so placed, but this also has the effect of saving material.

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In the event of any strain being put on a particular part of the article, it is essential to fasten that portion with a piece of leather, and so prevent overstrain. The stripe which has been clearly marked should form the trunk, pulling taking place on either side. To pull the centre marking out of gear would result in spoiling the article. All parts "tight" against the pattern should be nailed first in order that the fuller portions may relieve the shortage.

Any seams in an article which are intended to show, so as to improve the beauty of an individual skin, should be carefully nailed straight, as, for instance, in squirrel, moleskin or ermine. For the better and more valuable furs the nailer should make use of brass pins throughout, whilst in the cheaper kinds nails will serve the purpose. The work of the nailer does not cease on the completion of the nailing, for his attention should be given to the article during the process of drying, which should be done naturally and not by means of the fire. Artificial heat will dry up the natural grease of a skin and make it brittle, and this should therefore be avoided. When the article has been perfectly dried it should be removed from the board, beaten and cleansed, and handed to the cutter in a clean state.

In the nailing of such skins as Persian, the nailer should nail his article or garment hair uppermost, whilst in the case of white furs it is essential that a sheet of clean paper is placed between the board and the article.

The value of a good nailer's assistance to a cutter is enormous, as the former would know how to work a garment which tends to be slightly under the pattern

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in certain places, thus greatly aiding the cutter in his duties. For example, if a coat is placed across the board and found not to be in accordance with the pattern and a shortage is evident, the nailer should see that the shortage takes place under the revers and not near the armholes, or shoulder-seam of the garment where it would interfere with the shape of same. The material should be driven under the revers, subject, of course, to there being no other reason to act otherwise. Needless to say in many cases it is far more advisable to consult the cutter at this stage, as he may be in a position to offer better advice. He may perhaps be in possession of a piece which would remedy the defect quite suitably. This is one of the points of discretion referred to above.

The nailer should furthermore take care not to stretch the sides, as in doing so he places fewer hairs over the square inch thus making them impossible for use. These should be left full and the stretch obtained from the centre of the skin. Seams which in the completed state are required regular should be carefully adjusted with pins. In the case of an article which is to show no seams, irregularity should be studied, and seams pinned in an irregular fashion. Irregularity makes the possibility of seams showing less. In the case of cross seams straightness should be studied, otherwise the article will appear one-sided. Other points on this subject will be found in other parts of this work attributed to the various skins dealt with.

CHAPTER XII

CLEANING WORN FURS

DIFFERENT methods of cleaning are adopted for white furs and for dark. In both cases the very first step is the removal of any silk or lining, so that the article can be stretched flat. In the case of dark furs one often finds an enormous quantity of grease which has collected on the skin during wear. This must be removed. The articles are then placed into a drum containing sawdust and go through a similar operation of cleansing as takes place during the dressing, when the skin in the first instance is naturally greasy. The period of cleansing will of course depend entirely upon the state of the skin when it arrives to be cleaned. The caging process is next applied in order to relieve the skins of all sawdust, after which the article will have regained its original state of cleanliness. Should a drum not be available, a liberal application of benzine followed by hot sand vigorously rubbed into the skin has almost the same effect.

When the article has been cleaned it should be examined, and those parts which are found too poor for further use removed. In the case of a tie the parts round the neck will require attention; in the case of a muff it would be those parts which have received most friction. When these worn-out portions have been remedied, the article may be remodelled to its original or new shape, as the case may be.

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Any additions should be matched to the skin after the cleaning has taken place, for an article in the wear, if it is of a pale colour, becomes so dirty and greasy that the worker himself is often misled as to its original colour. This, however, is revealed when the process of cleaning is completed.

In the event of a skin needing re-dyeing, sufficient material should be found which will form the addition both for remodelling and repairing. The article is then recut, allowing a plentiful supply of material as shrinkage takes place during the process of dyeing. Additional material should be sent together with the article to the dyers in order that they may both go through the process of dyeing together. This method has the advantage of making doubly certain that the additions will perfectly match and thus provide for any unforeseen shortage.

It is never advisable to carry out the work completely before dyeing, as articles during the process of re-dyeing are liable to shrink, and if the cutter is working to given measures, this would make a difference to the size of the finished article.

With regard to the cleaning of white furs, of which ermines may be taken as a good example, the skins should be cleansed with benzine, which will remove all grease. They should then be covered with Plaster of Paris and allowed to remain for about twenty-four hours. The application of wet starch in the last stage of work will further cleanse and whiten the skin. ••

When possible, it will always be found advisable to use a drum in preference to any method by hand. It will, of course, always prove the more satisfactory

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way, particularly as this method is applied to the skin in its raw state.

The article will need re-nailing when it has returned from the drum. The methods to be applied for the remodelling of skins after they have been cleaned will be found under the headings of the various skins.

PART II—IN PRACTICE

CHAPTER XIII.

SABLE

French : *Martre Zibelline*. German : *Zobel*.

Natural History, Etc.

MANY types of marten are termed "Sable," but the sable proper is obtained from Russia and parts of North China.

We shall, however, for the sake of lucidity classify the Canadian marten, termed the "Hudson Bay Sable," as sable, under which name it is usually known. From the standpoint of the furrier, the Russian, Canadian, and Chinese sable are of most importance.

Let us deal with the most beautiful and valuable of the Russian variety of sable known as the Crown sables. The animals were cultivated especially to supply the Russian nobility with their exquisite skins. Any surplus was placed on the markets, and fetched exceedingly high prices ; for, taking into consideration the size, the sable is perhaps one of the most costly furs on the market. The price varies from £7 to £25, the rarer specimens bringing as much as £35 per skin. The average size of a skin is 14½ in. by 5½ in. The animal is a member of the marten family. The species generally have silky coats, but the sable excels them all in this particular.

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The sable feeds on hares and mice. It can easily be tamed and becomes very attached to its master. The male sable gives us a larger skin than that of the female. It varies in colour with the changing seasons. In the summer the coat is of a reddish hue with a sprinkling of grey hairs at the head. Its coat assumes a dark (nearly black) shade when the winter approaches.

The underwool is fine, soft, and the top hairs regular, varying between $1\frac{1}{2}$ in. and 2 in. in depth. The largest are obtained from Kamschatka, they being, however, a little lighter than those coming from Yakutsk and Okhalsk. The most valuable of all skins come from the former-mentioned place, which is situated in Siberia. Here are found the very rarest and finest—those covered with silvery hairs.

The American and Canadian sables are slightly larger in size, the average measurement being 18 in. by $5\frac{1}{2}$ in. These skins are found in colours varying from dark brown to yellow. The dark skins are worked in their natural state, but the yellow are usually "topped" to darker shades. The animals are trapped—they are never shot, as this would naturally injure the skin.

Great hardships and danger are experienced by the trappers in capturing the animals. In the vast forests of Russia, dense and dark, many a trapper has found his doom. Wandering out of the known track, he has tramped on and on, finally succumbing to the icy climate and privation generally.

When caught the coat is removed as quickly as possible and allowed to dry in the air after being stretched flat to its fullest extent. The best skins are those obtained from animals trapped in the

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season—the winter time. To prove this theory correct, a severe winter is always known to produce exceptionally fine skins, although an abnormally severe winter is likely to prevent the animal from obtaining a sufficient supply of food, in which case a perfect growth is not obtainable. Animals trapped between seasons or in the summer time are poorer in colour as well as texture; also skins trapped further north are usually darker. It is a noted fact that sables trapped in dense forests, where the sun never penetrates, are of the darkest type, proving that the sun has an injurious effect upon the colour of the skin. Sables are shipped to this country by the shipping companies, the chief amongst whom are the Hudson Bay Co., the Russian Fur Co., the Alaska Commercial Co., the Missouri Co., the American Fur Co., the Russian Sealskin Co., the Pacific Co., and the Royal Greenland Fur Co. They are forwarded to the vendors in London, amongst whom the leading are Messrs. C. M. Lampson & Co., A. & W. Nesbitt, Ltd., and Messrs. Fred Huth & Co. They are there classified in their respective qualities and are offered for sale under the hammer.

Classification (by Warehousemen)

The skins arrive in what are technically termed "Original Parcels," which means that skins caught from one particular district are collected and despatched in their original state.

The following method is then adopted by the warehousemen in this country, who sort them in the following manner—

1st Large.—The finest piled skins of the parcel

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selected for their size as well as the full pile, clear pelt and good colour.

1st.—This skin in quality is equal to 1st Large but not the same size skin. It must still be of the ordinary size to be referred to as 1st ordinary.

2nd.—Skins which have not the fine pile due to having been caught between the seasons or that the animal did not sufficiently develop. The colour would still be dark, but it would be found to possess a poor pile.

3rd.—Distinctly a summer skin, with little hair compared with the good skin, and dull on the leather. Sometimes it may happen that a skin possesses all the qualities of the 1st or 2nd grades, but on account of a blemish is put into No. 3 grade.

1st, 2nd and 3rd pales are classified the same as above, that is, with reference to their pile and size, but are in a category of their own because of colour. In the event of the particular shipment not comprising of sufficient quantities to divide, the skins are referred to as "Pt. Pale," which means that the dark and light skins are contained in the one parcel.

4th.—Would be a poor skin, damaged and unfit to be placed in any of the preceding grades.

Practical Work —

On studying the peculiarities of the sable skin, one finds that the head is of a flat nature. It increases in the depth of the pile until it reaches the front paws. It then runs pretty regularly, growing higher in the pile, taking that course right to the rump of the skin, where it is at its best. The variations in the hair are best observed in a very fine skin. The pile

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rises on either side from the flat stripe in the centre, decreasing gradually to the side, which constitutes the belly of the skin—too flat for use. From the outset it must be borne in mind that no cuts may be made running in one continuous cut from the middle of the skin to the extreme side, for the result of so doing would be that some of the flat part of the skin would work its way into the fuller part. Again, no cut can be made to extend in length above the front paws, nor may one be made in a downward direction beyond the front paws. Bearing all this in mind, the skin should be slit exactly down the middle of the belly. The skin will then be quite flat, except for the front paws, which should be cut through the under side of the paw and then stretched.

Slightly damp the skin and stretch. This enables the cutter to know exactly how much material he has to work with. The worker will bear in mind the article which he is about to make, stretching for width or length accordingly.

The object of this operation is

to give the cutter a better idea of how many cuts in the length or the width he may require, thus preventing

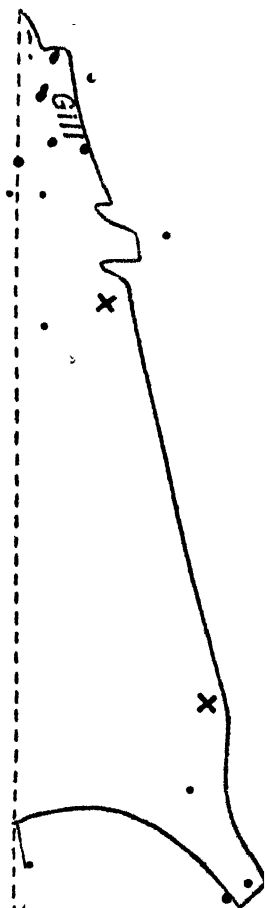


DIAGRAM 2.

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any unnecessary cuts. The centre of the skin must be clearly marked, preferably in ink, this also applies to the gill and sides. Care in marking should be emphasized. Any cut which is intended to extend from the actual stripe of the skin could be worked on the leather side, the ink marks having already been placed there for guiding purposes. Portions of the skin which are marked in diagram 2 should on no account be stretched, but left full. The very loose hair in these parts will be clearly seen on any skin. Any stretching will tend to place the few hairs that

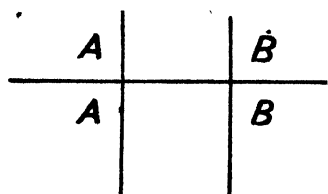


DIAGRAM 3

are there over an even greater area, which would make that particular part of the skin entirely unfit for use. A method of congregating the hair together is adopted by sewing a piece of flannel on

the leather side as a binding to a Polish seam.

Heads, tails and paws should not be removed if the article when completed is to have same on in the finished state. If the head is removed for some purpose—perhaps for mounting by a naturalist—it should, before removing, be marked as diagram 3. It may then be cut through the horizontal line, leaving two vertical lines on both the head and the remainder of the skin. This enables the cutter to replace same as nearly as possible in the natural position.

If occasion arises when the head must be removed from the skin, since the article is required minus the head, it would be folly to try and use part of the head to increase the size of the skin. This would render the head useless and would also give an awkward

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flatness, which would by no means improve the article. The neck of the skin will usually be found too narrow for work and will be required as near the width of the remainder of the skin as possible. Diagrams 4 and 5 illustrate the different cuts that should be used when the head is on the skin and when same is removed.

In diagram 5 we have adopted a cut which enables us to obtain the width in a manner which lessens the possibilities of any seams showing. The tongues protrude into that part of the neck which has the highest pile, whilst the gill is moved independently. Diagram 4, which is the method adopted when the head of the skin is removed for widening the neck, shows cuts which are inserted down the skin, bringing the required width into alignment. In diagrams 4 and 5 we may repeat the cut as often as is required.

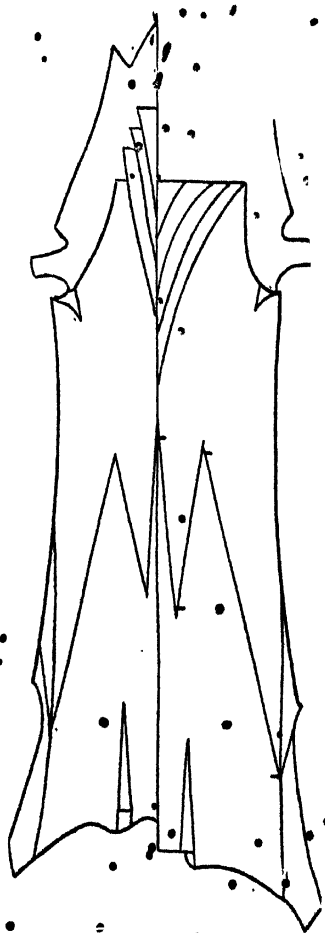


DIAGRAM 4

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A bad piece will be found underneath the tail of the skin. This must be removed by a cut in the form of a tongue, which is shown in diagram 4.

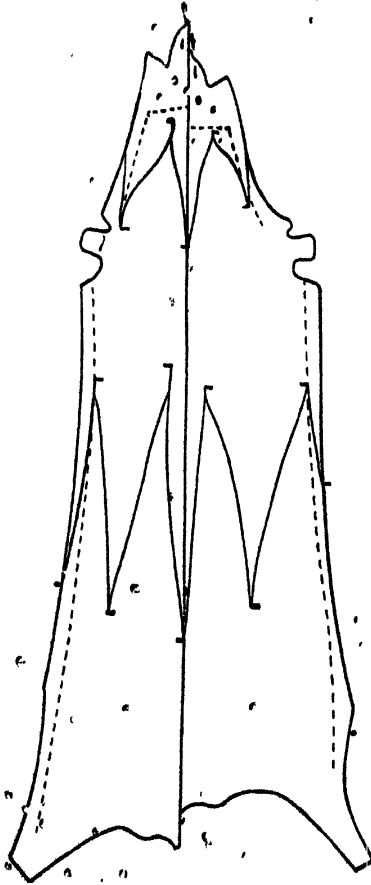


DIAGRAM 5

The extreme sides can be worked either on the skin or independently. In the latter case the sides should be carefully cut, and allowed to hang from one particular point of the skin—preferably the lowest point. Any cuts which are made in the length of the skin may be repeated in the sides (unless stretching is resorted to), and when the required length is obtained, the sides can be sewn to the original place.

«Cuts for the length of the skin should be long and tapering and are illustrated in diagram 4, as any stumpy-

ness is liable to cause puckering. «Diagram 4 shows the shortest cut which should be used. «There should be a tendency towards longer cuts. The points which are to be borne in mind are the following: The

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cuts should run from the centre of the skin and end as near the centre as possible, whilst the second cut ends in the middle of the skin. Lastly, the third cut will end at the side. All points should be on different levels, for the reason that irregularity tends to make the possibility less of any seam showing. The cut, as demonstrated in diagram 4, may be repeated as often as found necessary and should be dealt with by measurements, viz., 3 in. in the length requires six cuts of an $\frac{1}{2}$ in. to obtain the required length, having already taken into account the hope of obtaining the little that will be lost in the sewing of the skin by stretching. Cuts in the width of a sable skin are generally not required since the skin is dressed in the length, and the worker is able to obtain by stretching all the width he requires. Should, however, exceptional widths be wanted, diagram 5 describes the method which should be adopted. The above are the principles of the working of the particular skin in question, and it is left for the worker to use his discretion in points he selects to help him in his work.

Diagram 6 illustrates a collar of two skins in which a distinct circular sweep is required. The principle of the cut is illustrated in diagram 4. The two skins which are used for the collar should be split, half of one skin being joined to half of the other in each case. The first cut nearest the centre of the outside half of the skin should be let out a $\frac{1}{4}$ in., the second half 1 in. and the third cut $\frac{3}{4}$ in. The inside half-skin should be let in a $\frac{1}{4}$ in. nearest the centre, increasing to the outside to $\frac{1}{2}$ in., the result being that the outside is $\frac{3}{4}$ in. longer and the inside $\frac{1}{2}$ in. shorter than it originally was. This will tend to distribute the fullness which

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must occur in the procedure of easing and letting out of a skin. Our method divides any fullness and spreads it over the whole area. This cut can also be repeated as often as found necessary.

Let us now deal with a collar in which so great a sweep is not required. The method as illustrated in diagram 7 should be followed.

It is specially advisable to procure for this collar

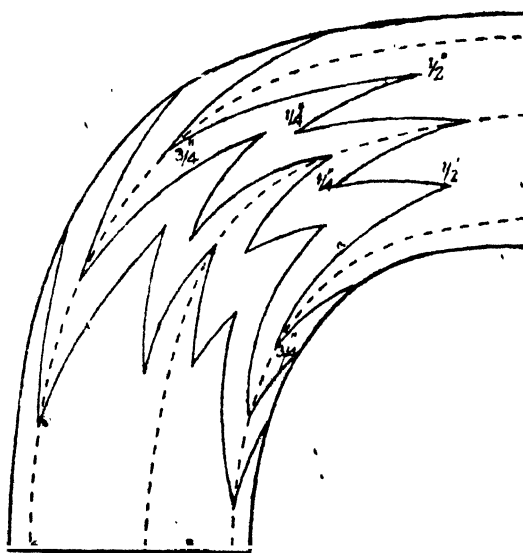


DIAGRAM 6

two skins, one slightly smaller than the other. The larger skin should be split and placed on the outside of the collar. The natural shape of the skin should be retained. The sides extend lower than the centre of the rump which is what is required for the outside of the collar. The smaller skin should be treated as diagram 7 illustrates and joined centre to centre. This method gives a simple way of obtaining the

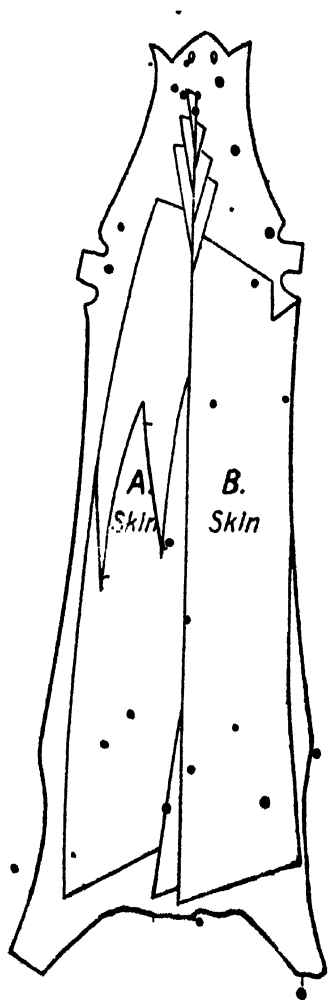


DIAGRAM 7

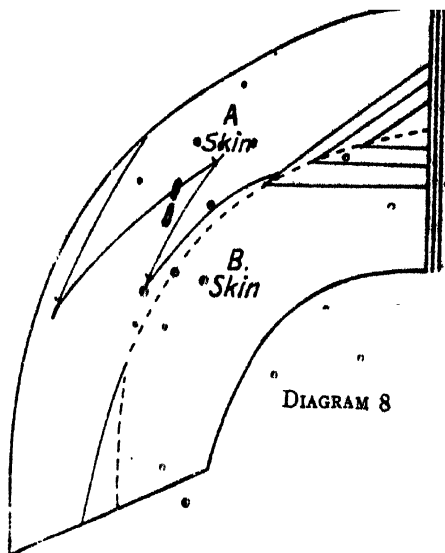


DIAGRAM 8

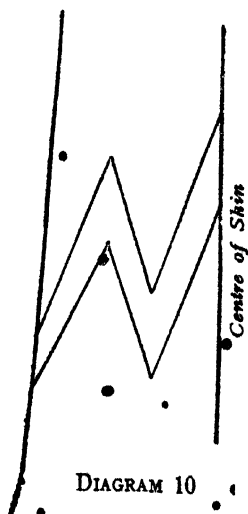


DIAGRAM 10

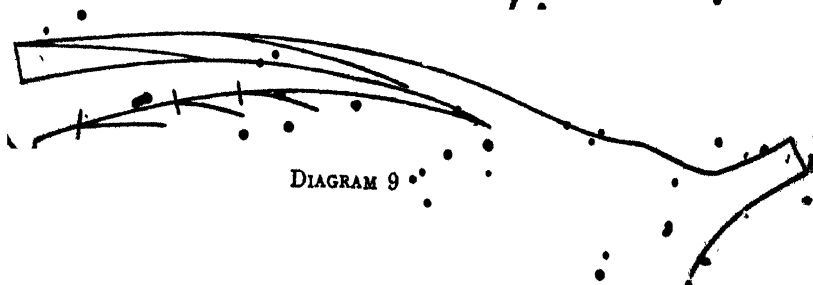
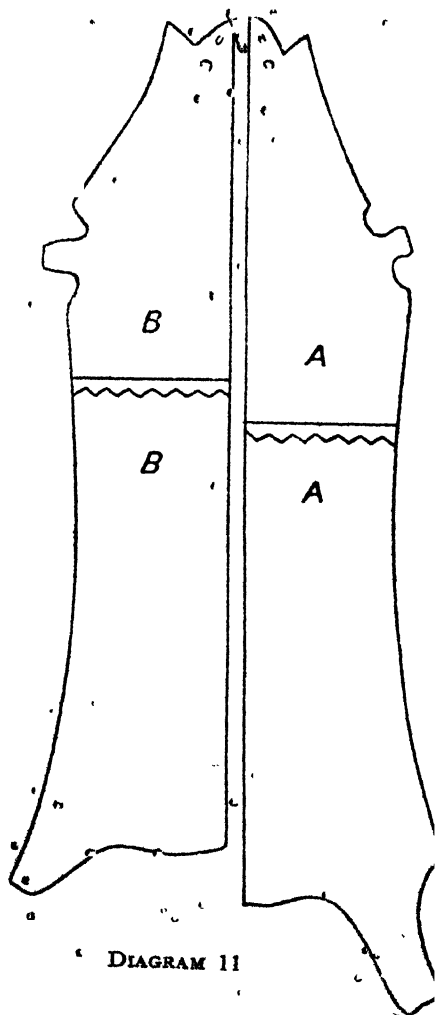


DIAGRAM 9

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desired effect. As will be seen in the illustration, the head is inserted to obtain the width required. Diagram 8 gives the finished effect.



In both methods the head should be joined at the back means of a Polish seam or a number of seams together, which will tend to bind the hairs closer, making the possibilities less of the ground showing. The dovetail seam is also used for the purpose of joining heads, and is much preferable to any other method.

Diagram 9 shows a method which should be adopted if the skin is required slightly rounded. In this case a cut is made in a rounded fashion extending from the side of the skin to a length of 3 in. This cut releases the skin and enables us to obtain a greater sweep. It will be noticed that

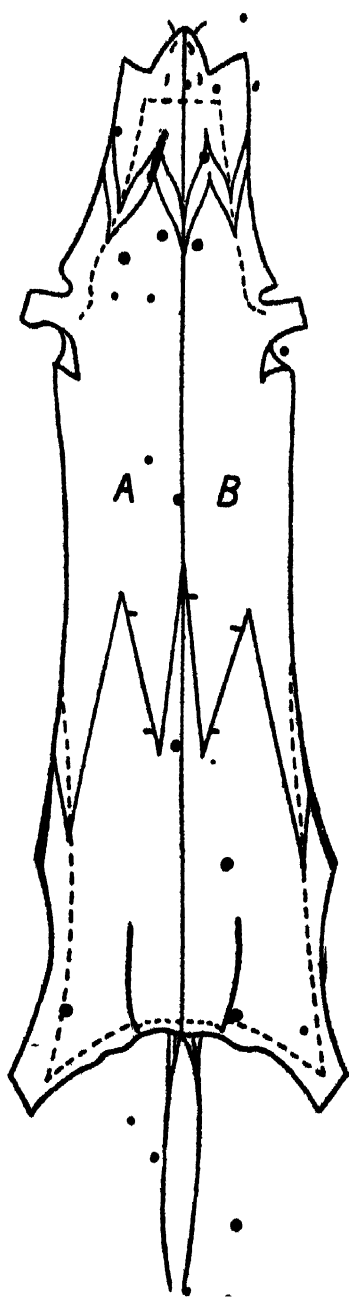
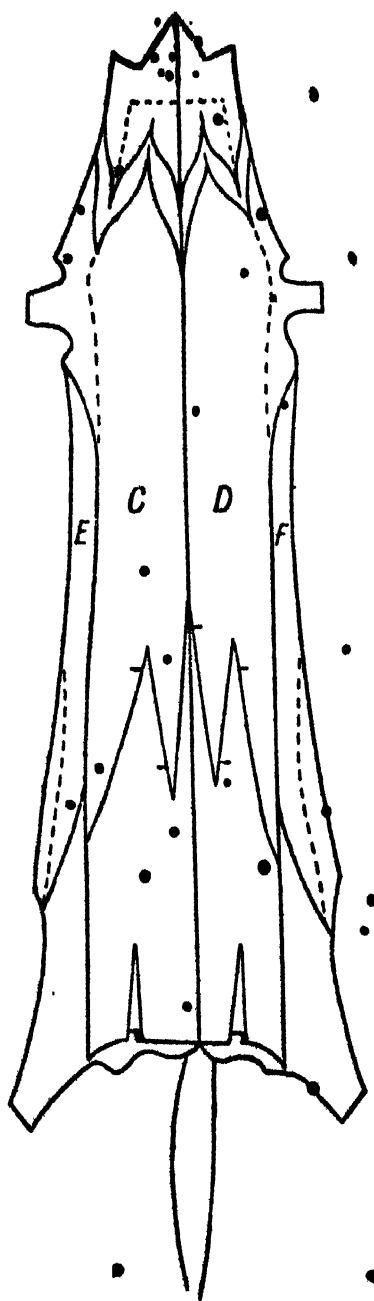


DIAGRAM 12.

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the side is independently treated in the length and joined back.

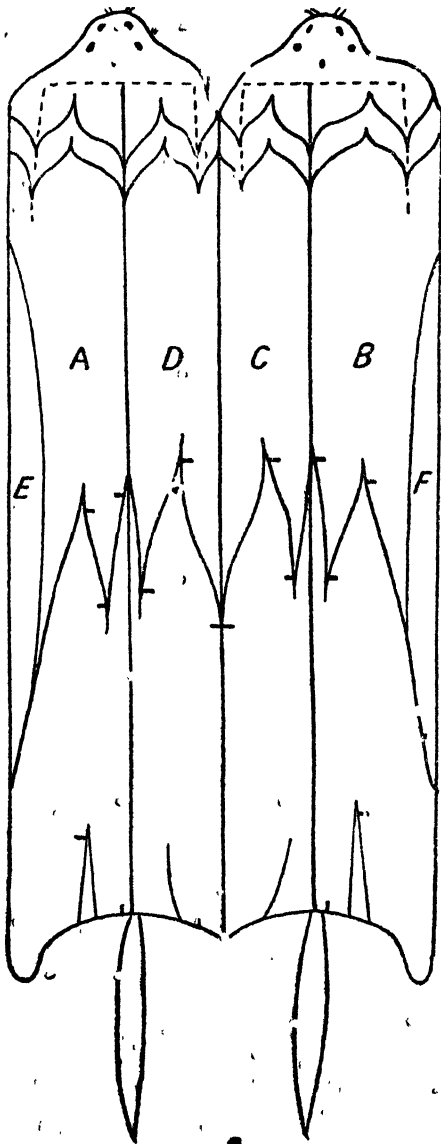


DIAGRAM 13

It often arises when two skins are of different lengths and the articles in question necessitate skins of the same length, a method described in diagram 10 will get the furrier over this difficulty. Assuming that one skin is 2 in. longer than the other, 1 in. is removed in an irregular fashion from the longer skin and inserted into the shorter skin, the result being two skins of the same size. It would be advisable to split the two skins when using this method. A further method when the same result is needed is described in diagram 11. A part of A skin must be found which matches a shorter part of B

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skin, as illustrated. The result after joining will be that the cutter has two skins of the same size, which should then be split. The seams may be Vandyked to ensure invisibility. A third method of obtaining a similar effect can be obtained by using cut, shape of diagram 10, with the principle of diagram 11. Cut may be carried out finishing at 1 in. above the hind paws. Diagram 12 shows a method of placing together two sable skins to form a muff. The two skins in question are skins AB and CD. AB skin is the larger of the two, both skins are required longer. CD is dropped to the length of AB skin, the latter therefore remaining the wider one of the two. CD skin is placed to the centre of the muff after being joined to each half of AB skin. The cut for the length should be repeated. The extra width at the sides of the muff will be turned in forming the hand-hole. The result of working the two-skin muff as illustrated in diagram 13 both utilises every available inch of the skin and at the same time gives uniformity to the whole muff in the splitting. Cuts for the length may be repeated as often as is necessary.

CHAPTER XIV

SABLE—(*continued*)

BEFORE the arduous task of cutting a particular article is commenced, the cutter sometimes has the problem of perfecting the damaged skins which have been given to him. On page 336 (Damages) solutions of a few knotty problems with which the cutter sometimes finds himself confronted will be found. Diagram 14 gives a further method of obtaining length. It will be seen that cuts are made in an opposite direction. The first cut is made towards the head instead of the rump. Diagram furthermore shows a different method of removing paws. Note should be taken of the cut above the rump which is slit and stretched as indicated. Two cuts are made at the rump, lengthening and narrowing in one movement. The actual cut for length finishes in its downward stroke $\frac{1}{2}$ in. from side, as a change of texture occurs at this part. The maximum of the length of drops should be $\frac{3}{4}$. Sides may be stretched or cut as circumstances permit.

In order to obtain the effect of two skins from one, the following method should be adopted: the skin should be stretched and nailed, obtaining width. Cut up the skin into a series of $\frac{1}{4}$ in. strips. For example, in the skin in question, we are able to obtain twenty-one $\frac{1}{4}$ -in. strips.

No. 11 strip forms the centre of A skin, being joined at each side by strip numbers in the following order: 1, 3, 5, 7, 9, 11, 13, 15, 17, 19, 21. B skin is

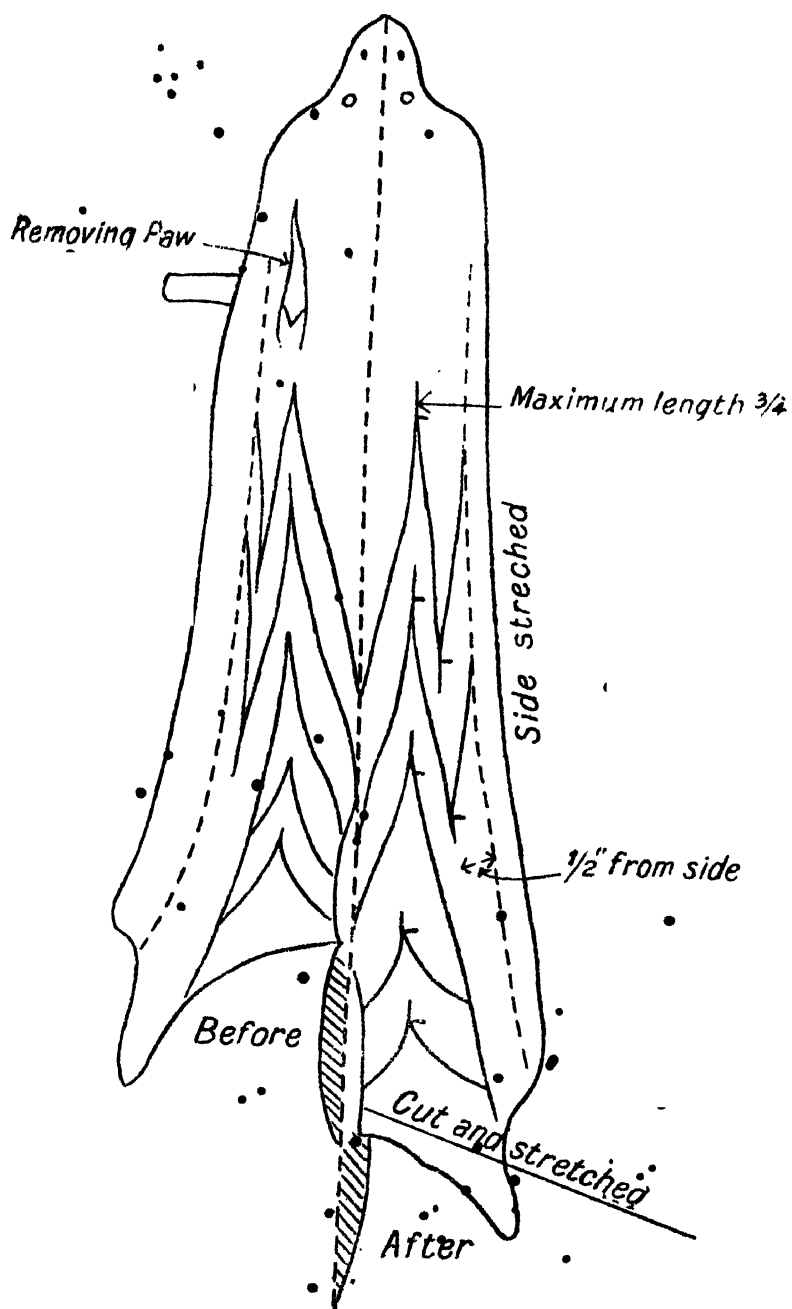


DIAGRAM 14

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comprised of strips 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12, 14, 16, 18, 20. It will be noticed that strip No. 11 is allowed to remain intact as it forms the centre of the skin.

Split the two new skins, joining half of A skin with half of B skin, thus further forming irregularity.

In the making of a sable coat, which, needless to say, is one of the most expensive of garments, one of two methods should be employed.

" In the first method each individual skin will stand out for itself, whilst in the second case, three skins are joined together in the manner indicated on page 83, thus showing panels of skins reaching from the top of the garment to the bottom. The latter method is of course far more complicated.

In undertaking the making of such a coat the foremost point to be borne in mind is that the success of the garment will depend on the greater number of skins used in the width.

If, for instance, fourteen skins were used for the bottom of the garment, a similar number of stripes will be noticeable. If in lengthening the skins, which in itself beautifies the article, the worker is able to put twenty-one skins in the skirt of the coat, a greater number of stripes will show, and this will have the effect of further improving the appearance of the garment. In using the material in this manner, the hairs are bound closer together which further improves the quality.

The latter method which is illustrated in diagram 15, method 1, is that which is known as "losing the seam." The skins selected for the garment should be carefully matched in the first instance for size, quality and colour. They should then be paired according to

SABLE

size. When this has been done a number are reserved for the centre of the back, the next best for the fronts, and the remainder for both fronts and back.

All skins should be carefully measured and chosen

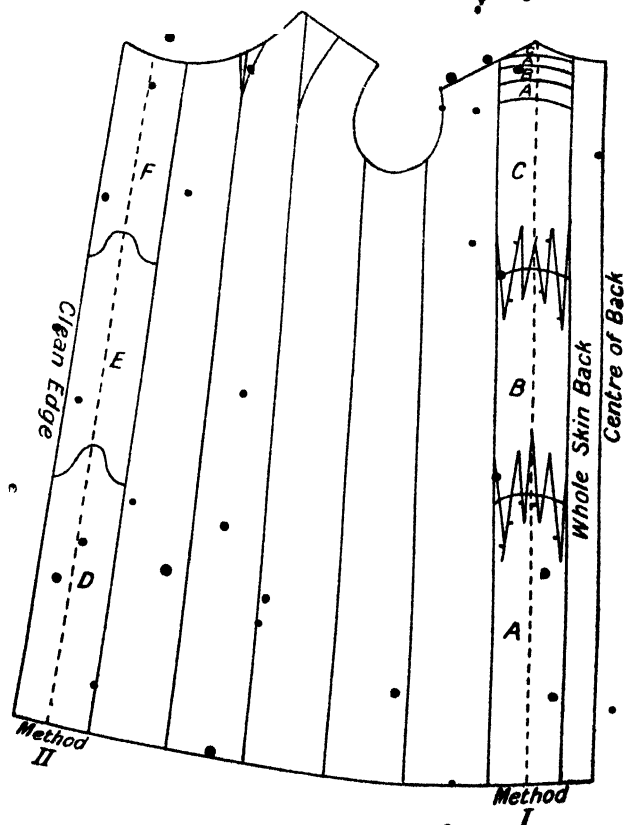


DIAGRAM 15 •

for their respective places in the garment, bearing in mind that they may be split as occasion demands. Assuming that the skins have been placed in position on the pattern, they should then be treated individually. The pattern should be carefully measured and

FURS AND FURRIERY

the skins lengthened according to calculation. The general principles of squaring a skin, as given on previous pages, should be followed, a whole skin forming the centre of the back. One skin, which should be split, will occupy either side of the centre back. Thus, the cutter will have three skins forming the most prominent part of the back of the coat, which are absolutely uniform in colour.

The object of the following cut is to make the three skins appear as one. In carrying this out, the point marked with a cross in diagram 16, which matches the rump of the skin, is removed and placed at the top of the three skins marked A, B and C. The heads are carefully matched together and, after being split, into strips, are fixed in a manner which will give a continuous flow of hair, the amount of portions cut depending on the nature of the skin. As the three skins in question are short in the length it will be necessary to apply cuts. These cuts should be made crossing the joining seams as this will help in the losing of the seams. If the work is carefully carried out, the intermingling of one skin with the other will make them appear as one whole skin. The diagram gives three skins in the length; should the length of the coat, however, permit one or two skins being used, the result is more satisfactory. Length could be obtained to a greater extent than in illustration.

This method is applied to every two or three skins in the coat, as the case may be, so that the required effect may be obtained. It may perhaps be advisable to mention that if a coat of this description is made with a flounce, the addition will prove a great help to the cutter; for such a flounce running in a

SABLE

crosswise direction will give the cutter a shorter length in which to work the skin in question, thereby necessitating less labour. The collar and sleeves of the garment should be worked on similar lines to those practised in the body of the coat. No cross seams of any description should show in any part. In most cases it will be necessary to apply the cut indicated in diagram 16 for widening the head. All cross seams should be joined by means of a Vandyke seam in those parts which do not require lengthening. This will ensure the loss of any such seams.

The method of making a sable coat with each individual skin showing is described in diagram 15, method 2. As much as possible of the good paw should be included, so that a hollow is formed to receive the head of the skin, which is cleared away as shown in diagram 17 and inserted into the rump. The skins may be split in the same manner as in the former method. The process is shown in skins marked D, E and F in diagram. In this method, however, it will be found necessary to keep that portion which is on a level with the front paws perfectly in line, for this particular part being of a flatter nature it will only then join satisfactorily with a similar part in another skin.

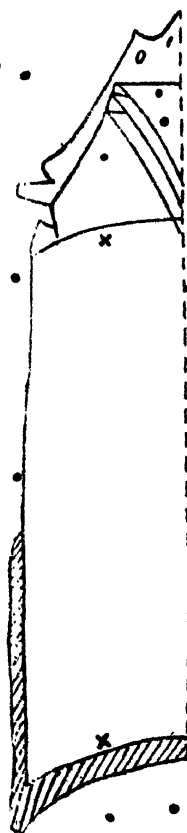


DIAGRAM 16

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This method is used more often for inside coat linings than for outside coats.

In both methods the centre of the skin should be marked to insure the stripe running continuously.

Too much side should not be left on the skin, and, furthermore, it will be found necessary to remove a small portion above the tail.

Nailing.—Although the question of cleanliness in the nailing of all skins in the fur trade is emphasized, it is especially necessary in the case of working sables. The hair of the skin is of a nature which is ready to take up all dust and dirt. Taking note of this, the nailer will carefully damp his sable article lightly with water, since the skin is thin in pelt. The hair should not be dampened in any way, for this both adds to the trouble in nailing, the hair clinging to the board, and makes the skin susceptible to dust. Damping the hair also prevents the nailer from getting as much stretch from the skin as he would were the hair quite dry.

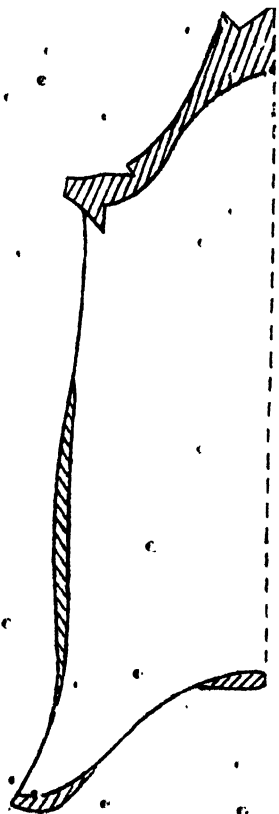


DIAGRAM 17

The board should be kept free from all chalk left from previous nailing, and the worker should, in the process of nailing, utilise every available opportunity of stretching with and not against the hair. Pins should be used and not nails. These

SABLE

should be knocked in upright and at the extreme edge.

The centre stripe, which has been previously clearly marked in ink on the leather side, should form the trunk, and should on no account be shifted out of place.

To enable the nailer to safeguard himself against such possibilities, he should nail a row of pins down the centre after having secured the length he requires in the skin. The skin should be stretched on either side of the pins, pulling from the centre and easing the sides, so that any stretching that the process of nailing has obtained for the cutter, has been obtained from the centre of each side of the skin and not from the actual sides. If these were stretched, they would be rendered impossible for use, and the actual head of the skin rendered useless also.

If the head is remaining on the skin, it should not be nailed, but a piece of damp wadding inserted into the head to prevent the same becoming too dry. Note should furthermore be taken of the two parts of the skin which are mentioned in diagram 2, and should be protected by a small band of leather from stretching. Artificial drying should not be resorted to, but the skin should be allowed to dry naturally. It is the nailer's duty, when the article is ready and removed from the board, to beat same before handing it to the cutter.

A point most important to be borne in mind is that the softness of the skin is of primary importance. An article should therefore be rubbed, and the little stiffness which usually remains after nailing would by these means be removed.

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The stage of straightening an article is now arrived at. In order to demonstrate, we will take as an example an article which is required straight on the hair side. To cut same straight on the leather side will have the effect of making the head much narrower than the rump, because of the flatness of the hair at that part. We therefore should trace carefully the variations in the hair at the different parts of the skin. It will be found necessary to allow at the head graduating down the skin, rising again on the level of the front paws, graduating once more until we come to the extreme rump, where the hair is at its best. By this procedure we obtain a perfectly straight line on the hair side. The seams should be carefully pressed with a warm iron to flatten same, and the article will then be ready for finishing. For other points on nailing, see page 58, NAILING.

CHAPTER XV

ERMINES OR STOATS

French : *Hermine*. German : *Hermelin*.

Natural History, Etc.

THE coat of the ermine is covered with grey hairs in the summer, whilst in the winter it is pure white. There is often, however, a yellowish tinge. The male animal is larger than the female, varying in length from 12 in. to 14 in. The head is flattened and the tail varies in length from 4 in. to 6 in., ending with a black tip. The neck is nearly as thick as the body.

The animal is found in North America, Russia (Siberia), Norway and the British Isles. The skins obtained from North America (Labrador, York Fort and Canada) are small but very white in colour.

The common English stoat, which is of much less value, is brown on top and white underneath. It is of very little use to the furrier as it rarely assumes its white winter coat.

Siberia produces the largest as well as the finest skins. Barabinsky skins are the largest known, being twice as large as the ordinary skins. Those obtained from the provinces of Irschim, Tomsky and Basmirsky are usually of the ordinary type, whilst those from Yakutsk and Viatka are distinctly small.

The skins known as "greybacks" are of animals trapped between the seasons, caught in either spring, summer or autumn.

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The ermine has always been considered an emblem of purity owing to its clearness and whiteness, and in the far-off days was worn only by Royalty. It is even to-day adopted by monarchs and high personages of the realm as part of their state robes. Minerva is placed on the skin, each additional black speck denoting the rank of a dignitary.

The ermine's prey is rabbits and game of small variety. It swims well and is caught by box traps.

When dressed, the skins are offered on the market in timbers (forty skins). They are wrapped and exhibited in blue paper, the colour showing up the whiteness to the best advantage possible. They are classified by the warehousemen in the following manner, on being offered—

1st.—Denotes first quality, fine pile, clear pelts.

2nd.—A skin not good enough to be included in 1st grade because of pile or clearness.

3rd.—A skin flat or discoloured or both.

Smalls.—Small in size, but quality good enough to be placed in any of the above classes.

Practical Work

The ermine is an expensive fur, since the market value to date for a medium skin, is high. No labour, therefore, should be considered too much to obtain the best possible results.

Cleanliness is essential in dealing with the manufacture of furs, but this is especially the case with ermines. Before commencing work, the table should be covered with paper.

In order that all points of interest in the working of ermines should be touched upon, we shall explain

ERMINES OR STOATS

- the making of an eight-skin muff as diagram 20, four skins on each side of the muff.

The skins are first carefully matched, pile, type, colour and size being all taken into consideration. When this has been done, the skins selected should be carefully opened along the belly, special care being taken that they are cut perfectly down the middle. It is sometimes necessary to leave the yellow sides, but on other occasions they are not required. In the former case, it is necessary for the yellow portion to be equally divided on either side. The skin should be slightly stretched by the hand and not damped. It should be marked down the middle with pencil. Indelible pencil or ink should not be used.

Of the eight skins which have been secured for our muff (see diagram 20), it will be found that four are smaller than the others. Care should therefore be taken that all skins of the same length should be on the same level.

On studying the hair carefully, it will be discovered that the extreme head must be removed. The extreme sides, the lower part especially, will be found bare, and the extreme rump will have to be cleared away. The skin being a costly one (as already mentioned) and small at that, it is necessary that every quarter of an inch should be utilised. In joining two skins together, therefore, we remove the head and rump in an arch fashion, as in diagrams 18 and 19. The head fitting into the rump gives us a seam which shows up each individual skin, being the effect required. Straight seams waste material and do not give so good a result. The head fitting into the rump

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should be placed in the position of the continuous pencilled line of each skin.

The front paws of the skin have to be removed. We will therefore choose one of the two methods illustrated below. The first method removes the paw

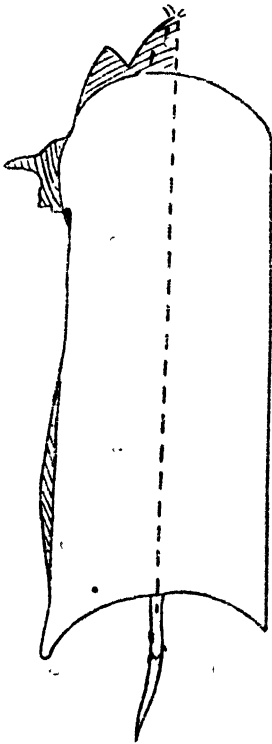


DIAGRAM 18

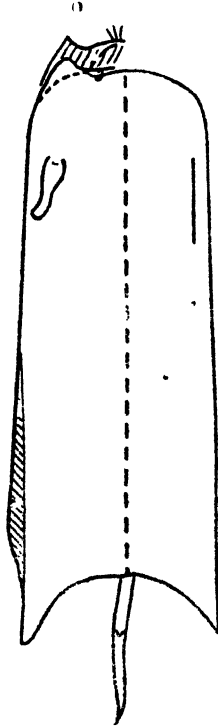


DIAGRAM 19

by a straight cut on either side, which is afterwards sewn together by a fine seam (diagram 19).

In the second method (diagram 18) the paw is turned inside out, leather outwards, and a cut made extending from the side through the paw, which opens the paw out, extending it further out than the side of the

ERMINES OR STOATS

skin. We are then able to remove the yellow part of the skin and also the paw without a seam appearing as it does in the first method. The skin being a flat-piled one, it is advisable to avoid seams where possible. Where, however, it is imperative to have these, they should be covered by a tail whenever opportunity arises.

No drops or elaborate cuts should ever be used in ermines as these will be visible. The pliability of the leather which, when properly dressed, is thin and elastic, helps us considerably in this matter, as it can be stretched to any required shape.

Damages should be removed by the fewest cuts. As an instance, should a small damage appear on the skin, one straight cut on either side of the damage would, when sewn, appear flat. This method should be chosen in preference to a tongue, which gives three distinct seams.

All seams used for joining should be sewn finely, for economical reasons as well as for strength. Should any two skins which have to be placed side by side not match in pile at the sides (although they do so over the rest of the skin), the removal of a small strip of the flat skin will bring the pile of the hair to the required depth.

If an animal effect is required, the head should not be removed but worked on the skin, and should not be allowed to become too dry in the process of working before being mounted.

In setting out to make the ermine coat or cloak the following procedure should be adopted to ensure a perfect success. Some 160 skins will be required for this purpose, which should be carefully matched

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into pairs in the first place, studying size, colour and pile. The pairs should then be matched together, with the result that the cutter will eventually have immediately under his eye forty sets of four, each four being as near as possible alike in texture, etc.

Amongst the 160 skins, which presumably match in the first instance, there will always be found a number of skins which are far superior to the remainder. These should be reserved for the most prominent parts of the garment, viz., the collar, cuffs, sleeves, etc. Of the remainder the longest skins should form the bottom of the coat, the shorter ones being worked to the top. Skins running side by side should be equal in length and as near as possible in width, so that in the finished garment perfect symmetry is obtained. The seams* of the coat should run regularly, each skin joining the next correctly so that they are all even in appearance. For removing the paws the process indicated in diagram 18 is recommended.

Should any skin possess a blemish which necessitates removing a portion, this in itself should be sufficient reason why it should not constitute a prominent part of the garment.

Nailing and Finishing.—In preparing the ermine article for nailing, it should be slightly damped with a piece of wadding at a time when the nailer is ready, and not allowed to soak for any period.

The hair should not be wetted and, furthermore, nailing should be done on a paper-covered board. The article should be nailed once only, as to have to re-nail would cause the skin to become brittle. Brass pins should be used and not nails. These should be

ERMINES OR STOATS

- knocked in at the very edge of the skin. Allow the article to dry naturally ; this will give us a soft effect. All joining seams should be perfectly straight, and should, if necessary, be adjusted with pins.

In the case of nailing an ermine coat special care should be taken that each seam is absolutely straight and adjusted with pins. If gores appear in the garment in question, the skin should be slit whilst on the nailing board, the pins being carefully knocked round the hole of the gore, in order that when it has been evened round and sewn together, the skins in that quarter will still retain the correct shape. If the article were cut other than in this manner, the result would most certainly give irregular seams and perhaps mean the loss of a portion of material which would interfere with the regular shape of the garment as a whole.

The position of the tails should be indicated by the cutter. An upright cut is made, the top part of the tail inserted and stitched down. The remainder of the tail to the commencement of the black tip is stitched in a cross fashion as in diagram 20. This will prevent it from looking too stiff and artificial. The article should be taped at the sides before the edges are turned over.

Although cleanliness has been studied throughout, it would still be as well to apply a little benzine to rid us of any grease which may yet be lurking about. We then set with blue starch moistened with water. After being allowed to dry, the starch is beaten out.

Cleaning.—As previously stated in the natural history of the ermine, animals trapped both in a

FURS AND FURRIERY

certain climate and at certain periods of the year are of a yellow shade. Moreover, ermines worn for any length of time also tend to become yellow, illustrating that on the animal and on the pelt the sun has a deleterious effect. Advance has been made in all

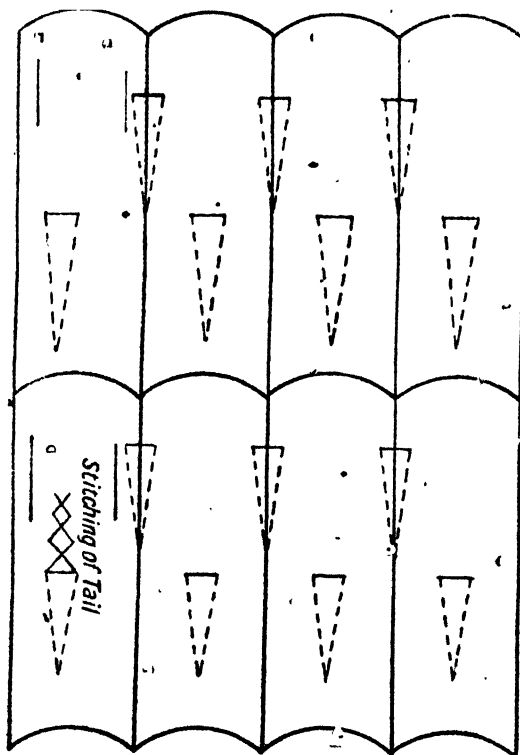


DIAGRAM 20

stages of the fur trade within the past few years, especially in the dressing of skins, but we still await the discovery of a method of satisfactorily bleaching a yellow skin. General methods of bleaching are given below. There is also an electric device which is supposed to react against the effects of the sun.

ERMINES OR STOATS

- These all tend to whiten the skin, but unfortunately the good results very soon disappear.

Dressers adopt the following way of dealing with the difficulty. The skins at a certain stage of dressing are placed into a sulphur chamber after being covered with white powder, this powder having been previously moistened with water and smeared over the skins. They remain in the sulphur chamber for twenty-four hours. This idea, by the way, originated on the Continent, and has the effect of whitening the skin to some degree.

The manufacturer first of all removes all grease by the application of benzine. The article is then covered in plaster of Paris for a few hours, and is shaken out. Some blue starch is mixed with a little water, and spread all over the hairs with a small brush. The starch is allowed to dry and is then well beaten out.

CHAPTER XVI

MOLES

French : *Taupe*. German : *Mulwurf*.

Natural History

MOLES are found in Great Britain and various parts of the Continent. The greatest number are subscribed from Holland, whilst some of the very finest moles are obtained from Scotland.

These little animals are regarded as pests by the farmers, as they uproot the plants and interfere with the crops. They feed chiefly on insects, etc., and are attracted to moist ground and hilly parts.

Their eyes are extremely small and covered by fur, which has no doubt given rise to the popular belief that moles are blind. The front paws act as a rake and the back paws as a shovel, so enabling the animal to make its way through the smallest crevice.

There is no external ear, and the mouth is long and pointed. The snout is of greatest use to the mole, as it is able to smell its whereabouts, in fact it is of more use than its eyes, as its life is spent underground. It builds tunnels through which it is able rapidly to pass in order to obtain food. The tunnel often ends on a level with the ground, whilst at the far end elaborate chambers, galleries and sleeping apartments of the mole can be found. It is a good swimmer.

The market value six or seven years ago for a raw mole, was 2d. It was trapped merely because it was

MOLES

a nuisance to farmers. Suddenly, however, the fur became fashionable: 1s. and 1s. 6d. is now demanded for a skin. The mole measures 5 in. by $3\frac{1}{2}$ in.

The descriptions under which the various classes of moles are sold are the following—

1st *Ex. large*.—A fine winter skin. Extra large in size.

1st.—Ordinary size, first grade.

2nd.—Skin caught in summer, dull on leather, pile not as high as that of a good skin.

3rd.—Skin caught between seasons, shedding its coat; or the skins of any of the above classes which are defective.

Practical Work

In the working of the moleskin as few cuts as possible should be introduced, and the chief effect one should aim at is uniformity in each skin.

The extreme head of the mole (which is too flat for use) is removed, together with the hard sides which are also useless on account of the thickness of the pelt and the discoloration of the hair.

In commencing operations the following suggestions will aid in the matching of skins for a fur article or garment. The skin should be folded with the hair running to the side. It is matched better on a level with the eye. Amongst a parcel of moleskins can be found three distinct kinds: the winter skin which has a thick pile (termed "firsts"), the summer skin with a very flat pile (termed "seconds"), and also a class of skin which is shedding its coat. These are caught between the seasons. The differences in all three can be detected on the leather side as well as on the hair. The first skins possess a clear pelt,

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and the other classes referred to possess markings and general dullness.

The skins are matched in qualities and colour on the hair side in the method above mentioned. After having been matched, they are worked on the leather side, care being taken that small skins are not worked along with the large, for by so doing irregularities of skins are caused and uniformity not obtained. The top skin should be marked as the first, and the remainder put pelt to pelt, one on top of the other, so as to enable us when continuing with the article to dispense with turning to the hair side of the skin. The skin is slightly damped, the sides are removed, when it will be found very pliable. As much advantage of the natural shape should be taken as possible. Below will be found the different methods of working moles, the irregular rump of the skin being removed according to the shape which is ultimately decided upon.

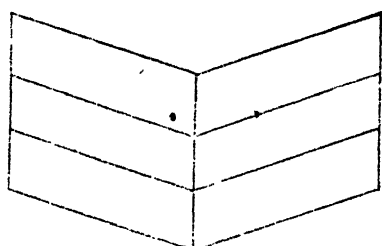
No. 1 method (diag. 21) is usually termed the Chevron fashion. The centre of the rump is pulled into the length as much as possible, the skin is split and the head removed parallel with the rump, as diagram. Rumps are then joined. The skins are placed side to centre, each skin fitting into the other.

No. 2 method (diag. 22) is another Chevron style, a whole skin being used in place of a half. With this method it will be found extremely awkward to avail ourselves of the stretching facilities, as we are pulling the skin in a most unnatural fashion. The rumps are then joined and the skins are sewn above and below side to side.

No. 3 method (diag. 23) is the plain scalloped

MOLES

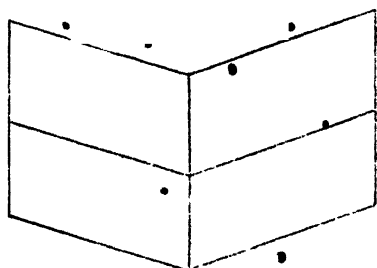
method. Here we are able to utilise to its fullest extent the natural shape of the skin. The head is removed and the sides lifted, whilst the point of the rump is taken full advantage of. The rump of the



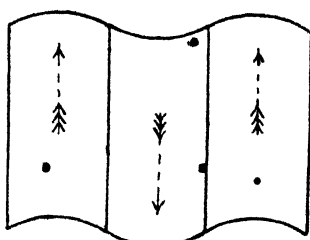
Method 1
DIAGRAM 21



Method 3
DIAGRAM 23



Method 2
DIAGRAM 22

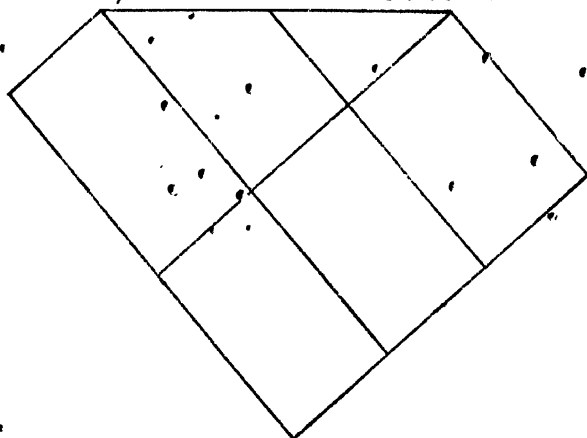


Method 4
DIAGRAM 24.

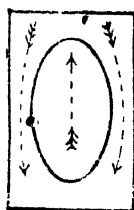
top skin is joined into the head of the underneath skin and the same method is continued until the desired length is arrived at.

No. 4 method (diag. 24) is similar to the one just described, the two outside rows of the skin running

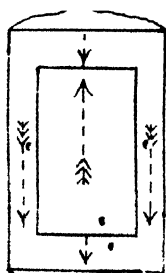
Top of Muff. Skins follow round



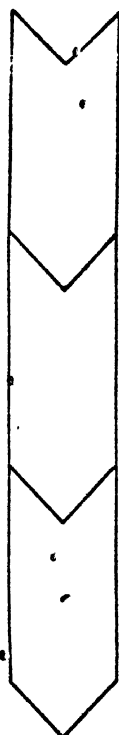
Method 5—DIAGRAM 25



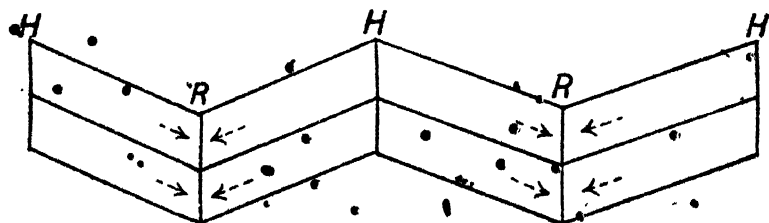
Method 7
DIAGRAM 26



Method 8
DIAGRAM 27



Method 10
DIAGRAM 29



Method 9—DIAGRAM 28

MOLES

- hair down, whilst the centre row runs hair up, the object being to give us a shaded effect, for moles shade light when the hair runs down and dark when the hair runs up.

No. 5 method (diag. 25) is known as the Diamond shape. The skin is squared and is placed in position, as illustrated below, with hair running in the direction of the position of the skin. A number of other methods are also illustrated below, including Nos. 7 (diag. 26), 8 (diag. 27), 9 (diag. 28), and 10 (diag. 29), which have a very fine effect. The skins are squared and sewn together. The centre of the mole is reversed, as in diagram, the shading effect being given in each particular skin. The seams should be very fine, the pelt being so thin. The procedure which should be adopted in the making of a moleskin garment by any of the nine methods given is as follows—

The pattern should be made adaptable to moleskin. Diagrams 30 and 31 give us a method of adapting an ordinary kimono pattern into one which can be used for moleskin. The object of the conversion is to enable one to place the moles correctly together without disturbing the regular form of each skin. The moles should be matched in fifties, colour, size and type being taken into consideration. They should be cut as previously described and sewn in panels. The panels should then be sewn together into the garment required, as is described in diagram 24, method No. 4. The rows are worked in an up-and-down direction. Care must be taken that if side seams occur, the skins joined should flow in the correct direction as well as showing a perfect whole skin. A combination of one method with another is often shown, this forming, in

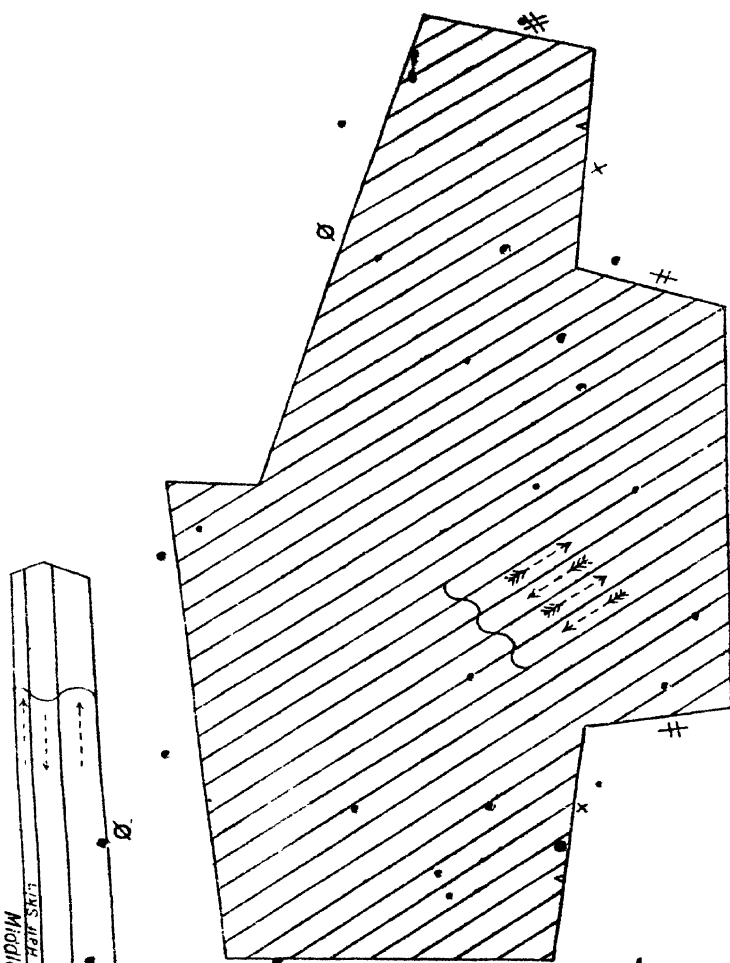
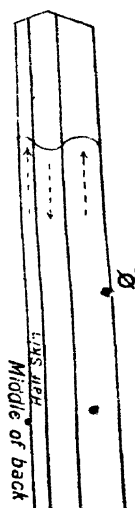


DIAGRAM 31



✱ ✱
Hair flows in direction of arrows

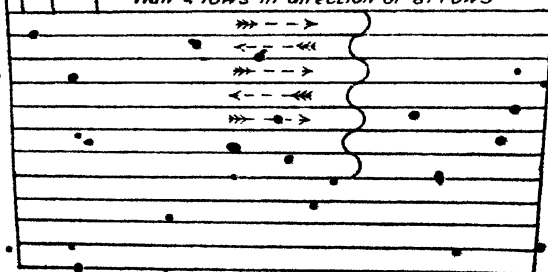


DIAGRAM 30

MOLES

some cases, a flounce which enriches the appearance of the garment. It will be found necessary to thoroughly back a mole garment with a thin linen fabric or mull, similar to the method adopted in seal musquash. This prevents the seams from tearing in the wear. The garment should be quite soft on completion; any hardness diminishes the value.

Nailing.—The points to be taken note of in the nailing are the following: The pelt of the skin should be damped slightly, and the article not stretched too much, as this would render the seams uneven. When the article is tacked out to the required size and shape, the seams should run perfectly straight, and be tacked down with brass pins. The drying should not be done by the fire or in the sun, but should be effected naturally as excessive heat makes the pelt both brittle and *crackly*. This is due to the fact that the fur dresser rubs grease into the skin which is dried out by any artificial heat.

To make a mole article perfectly, the seams should be straight and it should be soft to the touch. After removal from the board, the article should be rubbed in the hand.

The dye indicated on page 354 (Formula No. 1) is used extensively on the pelt side whilst still on the board. This conceals the white spots on the hair side.

CHAPTER XVII

NUTRIA

French : *Rat. gendin.* German : *Affe.*

Natural History, Etc.

- THE nutria is a member of the rodent family and is known, under the name of the coypu. It measures in length from 20 to 24 in. It is principally found in South America and the Argentine districts. The trapping takes place in May and October of each year. At one period the animals were very abundant, but owing to ruthless trapping they are considerably fewer in number.

The diet of the animal is of a vegetable nature. It lives in and out of the water and breeds rapidly. Nature has provided it with teats on each side of its back, thus allowing it to drift down stream carrying its young and feeding them. The skin in its original state has a growth of hair which is pulled (see UN-HAIRING), the undergrowth remaining. It is in this state that the skin is used by the furrier. It is light sandy-brown in colour running to a beautiful dark brown, and resembles very closely the beaver excepting that the pile is not so high.

- Unlike other skins, after being trapped, the carcase is removed and the skin left in the sun to dry, thus reversing the method usually adopted.

Nutria is often sold by weight, a pelt weighing about 7 oz. on the average.

Practical Work

This fur has never been used in any quantities by

NUTRIA

- the furrier until quite recently. It was formerly used extensively by the felt makers. The skin at that period was split down the belly (the best part), which left the two tender sides. The centre was hard and common, and the dresser found it very difficult to turn the skins out whole.

The skins are now split down the back, which forms the sides of the skin, they are rather strong, and the dresser is then enabled to dress the skins without tearing them. Another advantage is that the objectionable back of the skin is halved, minimising the chances of its being too prominent. The cutter is then enabled to have a good centre to his skin protected by two strong sides.

The peculiarities of the skin are as follows: The head is very flat—one might say bare—and the rump towards the very edge also runs flat. There is occasionally more of the dark sides on some skins than on others. As much of this as possible should be removed.

Unlike other skins, nutria has a spongy pelt which stretches to a very great extent in the width, whilst one is not able to procure any extra stretch in the length. Articles should therefore be made whenever possible by working the skins in the width and availing oneself of the stretch. Any damages or holes, which may occur should be removed as shown in diagram 32.

In this particular cut we work contrary to the rules used in other furs, cuts being from side to side and not from head to rump. Any holes, therefore, after being split can be pulled in the width, when the holes will be found to close up.

FURS AND FURRIERY

Nutria is used in great quantities for the following purposes: Muffs and ties, collars and cuffs, and trimmings.

For the purpose of demonstrating the advantages of utilising the width, we shall now take the working of a barrel muff. Instead of joining the head on to

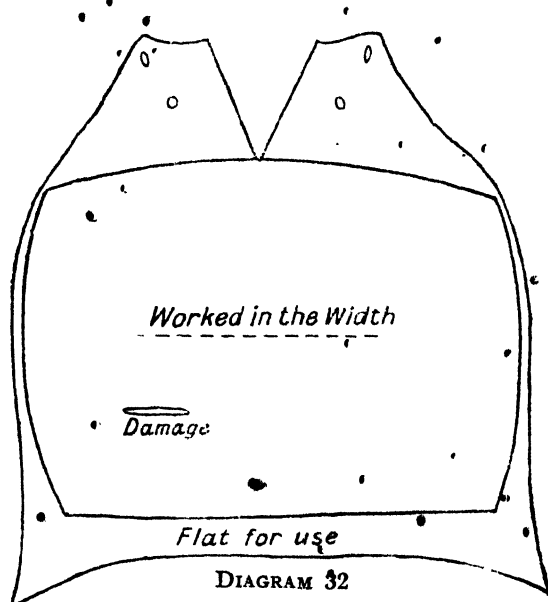


DIAGRAM 32

the rump, which would show a bad joining seam, the skin is placed with the head at one hand-hole and the rump at the other. By splitting the head which releases any tightness, one is able to pull the skin round in the width and join side to side, care being taken that part of the objectionable side is removed. We may mention here that this side is neither alike in quality nor in colour to the rest of the skin (diagram 32).

Diagram No. 33 illustrates a method of making a

NUTRIA

- collar from one skin, both the cut and the result being demonstrated. As much as possible of the good part of the skin is used, whilst the head and rump are removed. The cut demonstrated at the rump shows a method of obtaining the rounded effect required. Cut marked A utilises a good portion near the head which can be worked into the collar. Dotted line indicates shape in the finished collar. A third cut is often resorted to at the rump between cuts D and E for additional roundness, whilst often cut C also serves a similar purpose. The poorer side is worked to the inside, bearing in mind the possibility of the remaining side forming a facing.

In making trimmings of nutria, a method, as illustrated in diagram 34, should be adopted, in order to obtain as regular a colour as possible, making the whole trimming look uniform.

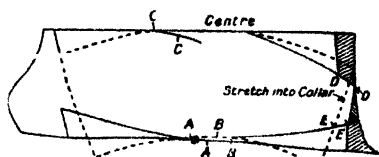


DIAGRAM 33

It will be seen that the skin is split in four. A portion joins A, as indicated, whilst B portion is sewn to B forming a trimming.

- Poorer nutrias are used extensively in linings, each skin being worked over the other. When joining the rump and head together, a lap seam of $\frac{1}{4}$ in. should be used. As the rump will be found flatter by the application of a lap seam, we lift the rump to the level of the head, making a continuous flow. A sharp knife should be used, the leather being so spongy in texture.

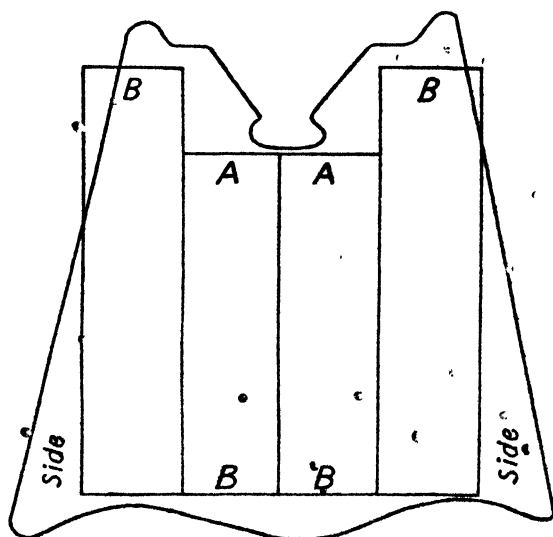
The nutria skin, after being pulled or plucked, is given what is termed a "silvering." This gives a

FURS AND FURRIERY

lustre to the skin which is very easily lost if not cleanly worked, or if it is roughly handled.

The better type of nutria skins have of late been used extensively for outside coats. The chief point aimed at in the working of this skin is softness in the garment on completion.

When a given number of skins are handed to the cutter for the purpose of making a nutria coat, he



• DIAGRAM 34

will match them, carefully noting the particular lustre that each skin possesses, as well as its quality and colour. Any blemishes which occur in the skin necessitating a seam, should warrant its being placed in a less prominent position. The finest specimens will be reserved for the important parts of the garment. The procedure of joining has already been given on the previous page. The overlapping of seams should be taken advantage of whenever necessary.

NUTRIA

- Every effort should be made to eliminate all seams in nutria, so that the coat when completed should appear as one whole skin.

The Vandyke seam is frequently employed but, as previously remarked, it should only be adopted when the worker is certain of being able to lose the seam altogether. It is preferable to show a straight seam rather than a Vandyke seam (diagram No. 96, p. 109).

A further important point in the working is that cleanliness should be studied throughout.

Nailing.—The skins or articles should be nailed on clean paper and the markings, which the cutter has previously placed on the skin to distinguish where the darker sides commence, taken note of. It is especially necessary that the skins should be stretched not from the edge but from the centre, as one is able to get enormous stretch from the extreme side, which, if done, will prevent the cutter from using any small portion of same, the few hairs being stretched over a greater area. A number of acids can be used for reviving any lost lustre, as indicated on page 354, Formulae Nos. 2 and 3.

Dust and damp tend to remove the silvering ; care should therefore be taken both in nailing and damping. For further particulars of nailing see page 58.

CHAPTER XVIII

BEAVER

French : *Castor*. German : *Bieber*.

Natural History, Etc.

THE beaver is the largest member of the rodent family. The skins are collected and dispatched to the marts of the world by the various Companies, and, by way of note, the beaver figures in the coat of arms of the Dominion of Canada. The animal measures from 14 to 32 in. in length, some exceeding a yard. The tail is 10 in. long. It is possessed of very strong front teeth and its hind feet are webbed. The belly of the skin is good and close in pile, this being the case with most animals that live in the water as well as out. Land animals usually possess poorer sides.

The colour varies from light brown to darker shades. Although white and mottled specimens are found, these are very rare. Beavers almost black in hue also appear on the market, these coming from Columbia.

The beaver has an upper coat of water hairs and is found in North America, Alaska, etc. Quantities come from Nooshagak, Labrador, Fort George and Nova Scotia, as well as from Mexico, Arizona and the Southern States. This animal was formerly also found in England as well as other parts of Europe. Russians attempted to re-stock the country with beavers, but the result was unsatisfactory. A certain Marquis did, however, breed the beaver in Scotland, the animals multiplying to a few hundred.

BEAVER

- It is easily trapped on account of the noticeable dams which it builds, these denoting at once the whereabouts of the beaver's habitation. Many people, well versed in the habits of the beaver, are able to judge the severity of the weather which may be expected by the way in which the beaver has built its home.

The beaver has the power of biting its way into the trunks of trees, thereby weakening same, and with the aid of its friends it is then enabled to throw the tree, thus forming a dam. This animal has most wonderful building ability. It forms tunnels through which it is easily able to pass, in search of food. The actual home is marvellously built; its tail is used as a trowel to flatten the composition of stones and mud or clay, thus forming a wall around its home which protects it from the cold. The beaver on being caught is cut down, cleaned and stretched on a hoop, often, in fact, sewn to same, in order to keep the skin flat and improve the pelt.

The water hairs are removed in most cases and a soft, beautiful, silky underground is disclosed. Formerly the skins were very extensively used for felt hat making and they are still used for this purpose, but not to so great an extent. Skins are sold by weight and are still considered legal tender in certain parts of the globe.

- The following is the classification in the raw state of beaver skins—

1st.—The choicest skin for colour, quality and good size.

2nd.—The skins of quality not good enough to be placed in Class I.

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3rd.—Poor skins, flat and faulty.

1st and 2nd Medium grade.—Qualities as defined, but size medium.

3rd Smalls.—Lowest quality and particularly small.

If sufficient dark skins are contained in a parcel, a separate heading may be made of same, viz., '1st dark.' In the event of there being sufficient quantities, 1st, 2nd, 3rd qualities in all sizes.

Practical Working

The beaver is extensively used for the purpose of collars, cuffs and trimmings. It is a much-favoured fur on the Continent and is used for both ladies' and gentlemen's coats. The peculiarity of the beaver skin, so far as the furrier is concerned, is the fact that it varies in colour from a dark shade down the centre of the skin to a lighter shade at the sides. This prevents opportunities in working to a very great degree.

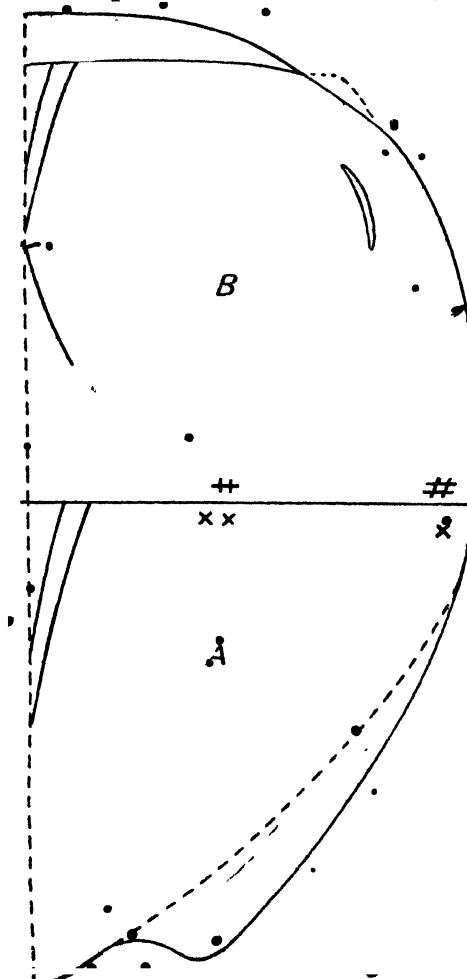
The centre should be carefully studied in the working of this skin, and should be marked. It must be borne in mind that should one be able to utilise the centre of the skin independently of the sides, the opportunity must not be missed. It must be admitted, however, that this is seldom the case.

The holes in the skin which appear on either side towards the rump should be removed by a straight cut, as will be clearly seen in diagram 35 (these holes are formed owing to the hind paws having been removed). In order to cover all points in the working of the skin it would be advisable to treat with a single skin and obtain from that skin a collar and lapels. Overleaf is given a diagram describing the most

DEAVED

• economical way of using the skin for that purpose
(see diagram 35).

The skin is split down the middle, the portions



• DIAGRAM 35 •

shown in diagram marked A forming the lapels, whilst
B, joined at the rim forms the collar. The centre of

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the skin in both cases forms the outside (the method of using centre of skin inside, is preferred by many workers). As much of the inside as is left will form the turning of the collar. The cuts shown in the centre of the skin form the extra length required on the outside of the collar as well as on the lapels. The result is likewise given in diagrams 36 and 37 which give the finished effect.

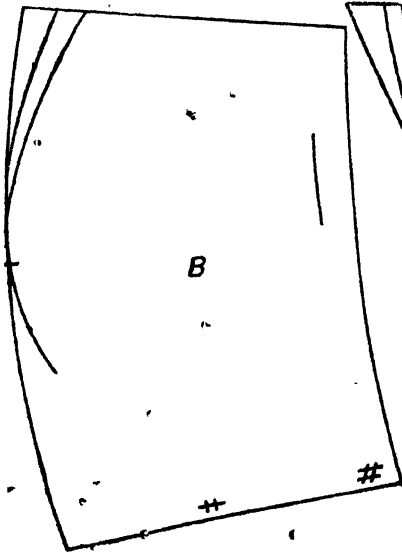


DIAGRAM 36

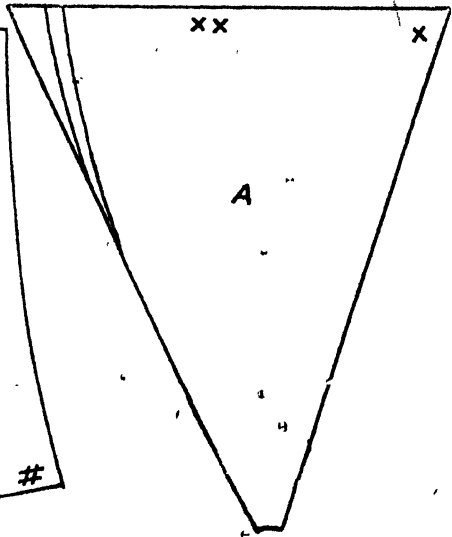


DIAGRAM 37

- In order to work trimmings economically, diagram 38 shows whereby we are able to utilise every available piece of the skin, at the same time distributing the dark and light-brown shades over the whole trimming. The cut winds round as illustrated and should be carried out after nailing the skin. Varied opinions exist concerning this method and its ultimate success. If this method is not desired, the usual course

BEAVER

can be practised, by which the side and centre are independently cut into trimming. In order to obtain this effect economically, cuts should be made across the skin from the extremities of the light portion. The width of trimming required is then cut. The sides are cut in the length, forming a lighter trimming with hair running in one direction. Whenever a collar or cuffs are made in beaver, the light sides or dark centre is worked into less prominent positions, which, in the case of a collar, would be on the inside of same. With few exceptions the beaver skin is nailed first and cut afterwards, in order that the cutter may know how much material he has to work with, unless the skin has been already nailed in the first instance.

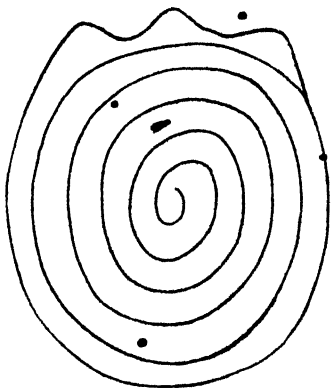


DIAGRAM 38

Damages are removed by the most economical methods possible, the high pile of the hair lending itself very well in covering up the few seams which may be found necessary.

The skin nails well and possesses a rather spongy pelt. In endeavouring to obtain extra width by stretching, care should be taken that the stretch is obtained more from the centre than from the side, since in stretching the side (namely, the portion we intend using) we should be using part of the light side which does not show to advantage.

In making a one-skin collar for a gentleman's coat, the following method should be adopted. The skin

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should be split down the middle and joined head to head. In order to obtain the roundness, required, three or four cuts are made, penetrating the skin in a rounded fashion, this releases the outside of the collar, and by easing, say 1 in., the roundness is obtained. This cut is demonstrated in article SABLE, page 75, diagram 9. The heads should be joined by a Polish seam. (For Polish seam, see page 55.) An additional

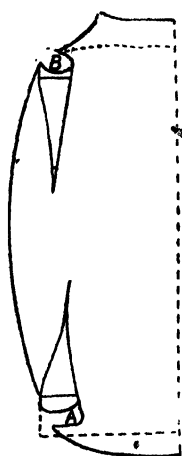


DIAGRAM 39

method is now given, a slanting cut commencing from the head and finishing up at the paw holes is made. The cut gives the round shape at the back of the collar. A system of cuts could then be made in a rounded fashion to obtain the sweep of the collar. Cuts should be made from the middle of the half-skin to the rump and will supply the point of the roll collar.

Diagram 39 gives a method of using all available good material and obtaining a squared flat surface. Places marked A and B in diagram 39 are obtained by a cut running in direction of side, which has the effect of releasing the leather, giving the effect as in diagram 39. In order to fill in the shortages in the corners of the skin, the cut is raised in the case of B side and lowered in that of A. The points of the tongues must be kept in alignment with the side of the skin, in order to preserve the uniform colour.

Diagram 40 illustrates a further method of filling in the holes which appear in the skin. After clearing the bad edge round the hole, a system of cuts should be followed as per diagram marked A. It

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- will be noticed that the cuts are rounded, and if carefully effected will serve the purpose.

Care should be exercised, as the turning of the cut marked A in diagram takes place exactly on the dividing line between the variation in colour. For a cut penetrating into the lighter shade will result in a bad join and a mixture of colours, thus spoiling the effect required. Diagram 40 furthermore gives a method of lengthening the skin. The cuts should be rounded as shown in diagram and used only with extreme caution, the first downward cut may be $\frac{3}{4}$ in. from centre.

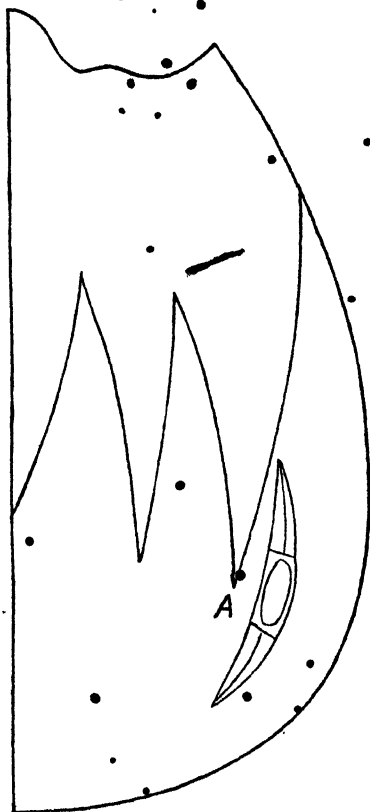


DIAGRAM 40

Beavers are often, in order to obtain a very clean effect, cut in the following manner. The material above and below the paws is removed in order that the flatter portion round the holes should not be seen in the finished article. This method needs a great deal more material and is used when beavers are forming the trimmings of a most expensive garment.

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The article when completed should then be set, combed and beaten.

Nailing.—With regard to the nailing of the beaver, care should be taken that the marks which have been previously made on the skin indicating the dark and lighter parts should be studied, and that as little material as possible should need to be straightened off from the outside of the collar. All superfluous material should be turned to the inside, as little stretch as possible being put into the light-brown sides, as excessive stretching will tend to loosen the skin, making it impossible for use. Nails should be knocked at the very edge of the skin, and same should be beaten when removed from the board before being handed to the cutter.

CHAPTER XIX

AMERICAN OPOSSUM

French : *Opossum d'Amérique*. German : *Amerikamscher Opossum*.

Natural History, Etc.

THE opossum which inhabits the United States, is about 20 to 22 in. in length. The colour of the skin is silver grey on a white background, the silver hairs being much longer than the white and covering the back of the skin profusely. Its whiskers, however, are black. A fawn type of opossum is often found in which the skin appears on occasions quite yellow.

The opossum is trapped in huge numbers but continues to multiply in spite of this fact. It is hunted day and night in all seasons of the year except summer, at which period the coat is very poor. This animal is trapped for its flesh, which is said to be good eating meat, as well as for its coat. It is a favoured dish in many parts of America.

An opossum often plays "dead," thus escaping the snake, its worst enemy—the reptile only attacking living creatures. The opossum measures its distance well, and only applies this form of deceit when it has not the advantage of attacking.

It possesses a long tail which aids it in climbing. When descending a tree trunk it winds its tail round it and drops head first, supporting itself by its tail; it is known to be a very good climber, obtaining its food from trees; whilst on the ground it feeds on poultry, etc.

Nature has provided the opossum with a bag under

FURS AND FURRIERY

the belly which, in the case of females, acts as a carrier for their young whilst suckling. The females are assisted in carrying their young by the males, who are also provided with a similar receptacle.

The skins are sorted for the purpose of offering them for sale under the following headings—

1st Ex. Large.—Skins of a fine quality and extra large in size.

1st.—Skins of a fine quality.

2nd.—A skin not so full in the pile, easily discernable on the leather.

3rd.—A poor summer skin.

Medium and smalls are often classified in a lot by themselves under the various grades.

Practical Working

The opossum has of late years become popular, for it lends itself very well to the trimming of coats and is also used for muffs and ties. The American opossum is often dyed black, or skunk colour to resemble the natural skunk, and when worked effectively will prove a close imitation. On examination we find that the skin is well covered, and that it will allow elaborate cuts to be used with little possibility of seams showing. The leather of the skin, if properly dressed, is very pliable, which further facilitates working.

The skin becomes poorer towards the sides and irregular at the head. In imitating the skunk the skin requires to be narrowed.

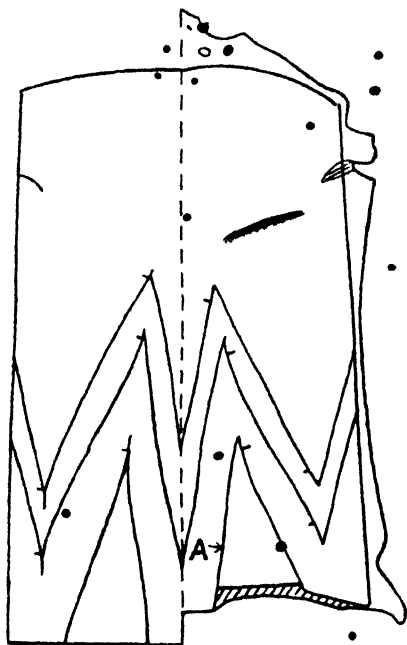
Diagram 41 gives an economical method of removing the head as well as the small undesirable parts below the front paws. The centre should be carefully marked, and in obtaining the length, one should

AMERICAN OPOSSUM

employ the cuts, which are given also in diagram 41. These may be repeated as often as found necessary, but the skin should be lengthened to the desired extent, which should be determined by measurement.

Cut marked A in the diagram enables us to acquire length, at the same time utilising every available piece of the skin.

A diagram is given, numbered 42, showing a manner of procuring a rounded collar. The cut nearest the centre, forming the outside of the collar, is moved $\frac{3}{4}$ in., the second $\frac{1}{2}$ in., and the cut nearest the inside $\frac{1}{4}$ in. The front paws should be dealt with as shown in diagram, whilst the centre of the skin nearest the rump is



• DIAGRAM 41 •

moved round to give added sweep to the article.

When opossums are worked to resemble skunk with a stranded effect, it is of vital importance that the skin be made long and narrow. A skin measuring 20 in. in length must be stretched and cut to 40 in. long. This will form a strand of the tie. Diagram 41 gives the method which should be adopted to obtain the desired effect. A further method of securing a similar result, which will make the skins appear

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narrow, is the subject of diagram referred to in Australian opossum (diagram 43). Here the displacement of the skins is clearly marked and numbered. It is of first importance that skins selected for this work be of good quality, as any cuts made to a great extent are likely to show on any poor quality skin.

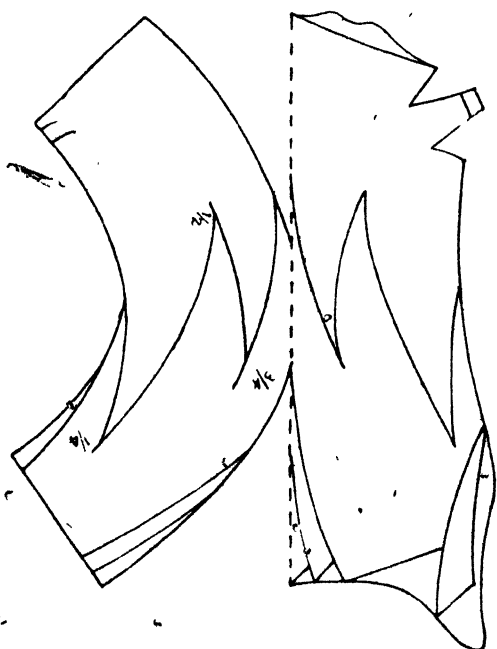


DIAGRAM 42

In the first instance, the centre of the skin must, of course, be marked, and as much of the poorness of the sides as possible removed.

Nailing.—In the nailing of opossum the usual routine must be adhered to. Care must be taken that any stretching takes place from the middle of the skin and not from the sides. If these are pulled

AUSTRALIAN OPOSSUM

- at all, the little that may be of use would be rendered useless.

The nails should be inserted at the extreme edge, and an application of warm water might assist in the stretching of the skin. The hair, however, should not be damped.

AUSTRALIAN OPOSSUM

French : *Opossum d'Australie*. German : *Australischer Opossum*.

Natural History

The Australian opossum is silver grey in colour with a bluish hue. It comes from ~~Australia~~ as its name denotes, and makes its home near the gum trees. It is also a good climber, and feeds on birds and fruit.

The opossums are caught at night, for they are easy prey in the moonlight.

The belly is of a yellowish tint, and many skins, which are termed inferior from the furrier's point of view, are reddish about the head and neck particularly.

The size of this animal is 20 inches.

- The Tasmanian opossums are larger in size, but not quite so valuable as the colour is not as blue although the quality is good.

The Victoria opossum is better in colour than the Tasmanian variety and about the same size.

- Opossums also reach us from Sydney and Melbourne, whilst Adelaide produces very fine specimens. These are exceptionally fine in colour, but not quite so large.

Practical Working

In order to touch upon all points in the working of Australian opossum, let us examine the skin closely. It will be found that the head is flat and that the

FURS AND FURRIERY

hair has a tendency to flow in a different direction from the remainder of the skin. This puts the worker at a disadvantage, inasmuch as he is unable to join the rump to the head, the former being much fuller in the pile. The method usually adopted is to join the head of one Australian opossum to the head of

another. In this way a good joining seam may be obtained.

The sides of the skin will be found rather pale in colour. As much of these should be removed as possible.

The skins should be damped slightly and stretched, erring on the side of length or width according to the article required, as few cuts as possible being made. The opossum skin possesses a distinct wide stripe.

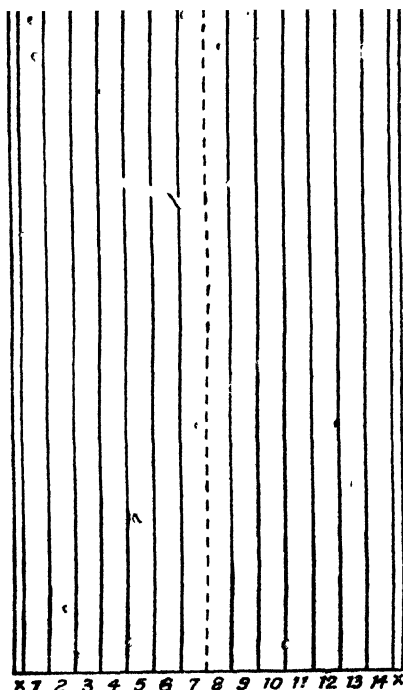


DIAGRAM 43.

On referring to diagram 43, one may see how the opossum may be worked most advantageously. The effect obtained by the application of the cuts shown is that two stripes of half the width are obtained from one skin, thus forming to all appearances two skins. The skin is cut as shown at intervals of about $\frac{1}{2}$ in. Nos. 7 and 8 cuts form the centre of one of the new skins,

AUSTRALIAN OPOSSUM

• whilst Nos. 6 and 9 cuts will form the centre of the second skin. The result when complete should be, first skin composed of strips Nos. 1, 3, 5, 7, 8, 10, 12, 14; second skin will be made up of 2, 4, 6, 9, 11, 13. It will be seen that strips 7 and 8 are not split, as they are in their correct position. If the skin in question is larger the principle remains the same, but the number of strips increase. Alternate strips as marked are placed at the side of each skin, which will give the desired effect. It should be specially noted that this method of stripping the skin in the length should be chosen in preference to any complicated cuts in the length which would have the same result. In the former method the seams will be less likely to show.

When any cuts are introduced for the purpose of obtaining length or width, care should be taken that the various colourings of the skin are not displaced. In general, cuts should only be resorted to when absolutely necessary. In joining skins in the length join head to head and rump to rump. A very beautiful effect can be given to an article by the method of "stranding." This is procured by lengthening the skin by method diagram 41 of American opossum, and allowing a little of the yellow side to remain on to show better the distinction between skins.

The article when complete will need retouching, especially towards the sides. Other than those points mentioned, the working of the skin is very similar to that of the American opossum.

CHAPTER XX

SKUNK

French : *Skunk*. German : *Skunk*.

Natural History, Etc.

THE skunk which varies in colour from the darkest brown to the palest shade, is 11 to 13 in. in length. It feeds on frogs, mice, worms, insects and occasionally roots. The white fork-shaped marks which appear on either side of the centre of the back are in some cases more pronounced than in others. Occasionally there is so much white as to show very little of the brown, whilst sometimes there is only just a light sprinkling of the white hairs at the neck of the skin. The skunk is partly of an hibernating disposition, and secludes itself for periods between December and March, a party of ten or more skunks, occupying one quarter.

The animal is noted for a bad odour which is its protection against its enemies. Should the skunk be attacked, it emits a fluid with a most objectionable effluvium, which has, in addition, the power of being able to almost blind one. So strong is this smell that, should a train run over a skunk, the wheels have to be cleansed. The tail of the skin is about 6 in. long, and is covered with bristly hairs about 3 in. in depth, usually edged with long white hairs. The tails are used for brush-making. The skins trapped in Canada are striped to a greater extent than those trapped elsewhere, the pile of the skin being thicker. With

SKUNK

regard to those found in the Southern Range, these are shorter in size and darker in colour.

When trapped at the right period of the year, it is beautiful and glossy in appearance. For many years the possibility of the skunk becoming a favourite fur was dubious, for the objectionable smell could not properly be eradicated after dressing; to-day, however, this has been done successfully.

In former years the skunk was sold under assumed names, because of this serious defect, but to-day this prejudice has totally disappeared. In fact, it ranks high in fashion and is regarded as a great favourite—a triumph in modern dressing.

Although worried by dogs and trapped in huge numbers, it still continues to increase, multiplying each year. It is found near farm-yards and where rats are plentiful; poultry and rats form its favourite food. The oil as well as the fluid is used for medicinal purposes.

The finest skins come from Michigan and Ohio. New Jersey, Virginia and Missouri produce a number of skins inferior in the hair, but darker.

When the skins arrive at the dispatching market, they are freed from all grease before being shipped. Those trapped in Canada are cleansed immediately after being caught. The skins vary in price, 5s. would be the price paid for the white skins, which are dyed before use, whilst as much as £2 10s. is paid for the fine dark skin. They are classified in lots before being put up for auction in the following way—

1st Black.—A skin possessing little or no white fork marks.

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2nd Black.—A skin possessing little or no white fork marks, but of a poorer texture.

1st Black (short stripe).—A skin possessing the quality of a first skin, but with short fork marks.

2nd Black (short stripe).—A skin of a second quality with short fork marks.

The above classes are often combined, in that case they are described as 1st Black and short striped.

Third quality is likewise sorted and described accordingly, whilst skins possessing a long stripe of white are classified under the heading of 1st, 2nd or 3rd, long stripes. The remaining class, those which have profuse white markings, only suitable for dyeing, these are termed Whites.

Practical Working

After the skins have been carefully matched, the surface and the underground all being of the same colour (the worker should match them from an elevated position to enable him to see into the ground of the skin), one proceeds to cut the belly of the skin, which will be found of no use in the making of the article. If the skins are long stripes it will be found necessary to remove the whites before matching, as the profuse white hairs prevent the correct shade being discovered.

The skin can then be stretched, since it is flat, and a little water should be applied. A stretching iron should then be moved across the skin, erring on the side of either width or length according to what is required. Two or three guiding lines should be drawn across the skin and the whites then removed on the hair side, being cut with or against the hair,

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as both methods are practised. When the skin is ready to be sewn into position, the guiding lines which have been previously drawn will show the exact position of the skin before cutting.

The skin is distinctly flat at the head, and variations in the pile occur until the rump is reached, which portion is the highest in the pile. Variations also occur from the centre of the skin to the side, whilst at the extreme side it is too flat for use. A great deal of carefully executed elaborate work is necessary to obtain good results in the working of this particular skin, owing to the variations in the pile. The centre and the sides should be carefully marked in ink and damages which occur in the skin should be removed, on the cross whenever possible, as will be seen in diagram 44.

The skin runs very narrow at the head and exceptionally wide at the rump, coming down to a decided point. The skunk skin can either be used in the natural form, taking advantage of the shape, or, on the other hand, a method of squaring the skin could be adopted.

In the former method we avoid any cuts, whilst in the latter the skin will need squaring.

Diagram 44 illustrates a method of squaring the skin, and gives the result before and after sewing. It will here be noticed that the cut for the head both brings the skin to a proportionate width at that part, and has the advantage also of being moved with and not against the hair. The sides are lowered by two or three cuts. The extreme point at the rump is then removed, the remainder being shifted into the skin. This levels the lower part of the skin, and also

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utilises every inch. Diagram 45 shows the effect when sewn.

Diagram 46 describes an alternative method which is used when one wishes to join a number of skins together. The rump of the top skin is inserted into

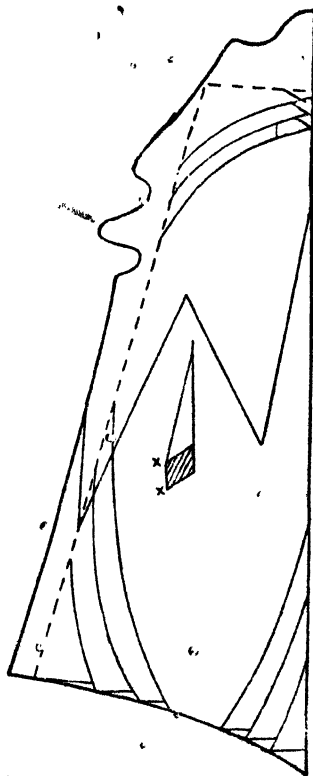


DIAGRAM 44

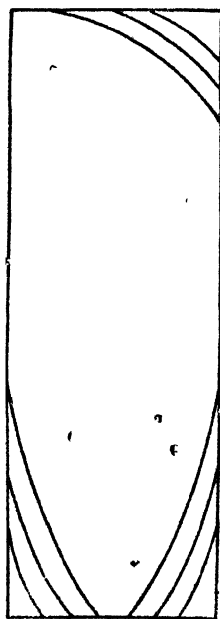


DIAGRAM 45

the head of the underneath skin. The advantages of this method are that one is able to join a number of skins together and utilise as much as possible the natural shape of the skin. The result, if carefully worked, is quite good, as it will be noticed that the

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extreme rump is inserted well down the skin that is underneath, the variations in the hair meeting in each case, for, as previously stated, the hair runs flatter towards the head of the underneath skin and flatter towards the sides of the top skin. If both skins are well matched in the first instance and the variations

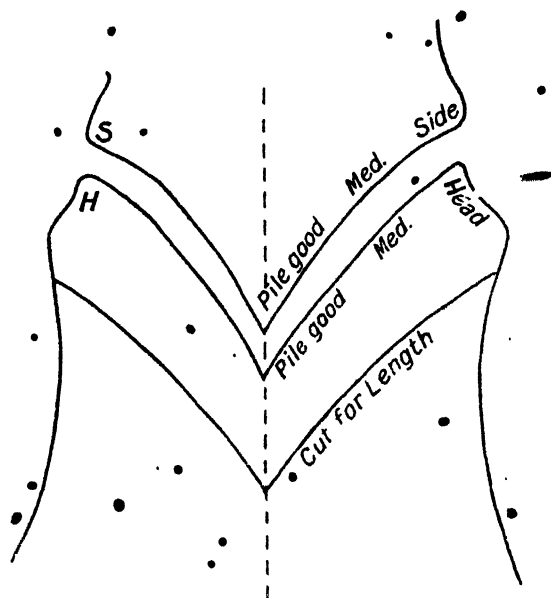


DIAGRAM 46

in the hair studied, the result should be an unnoticeable seam.

Diagram 46 furthermore describes a method for lengthening the skin, and should be adopted in preference to the method illustrated in diagram 44, as a number of cuts similarly drawn as the one used for the joining of the two skins, both give the desired length and also cause a repetition of the cut, making the original joining seam less visible.

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Diagram 44 gives the method of lengthening the skin when the method of squaring is adopted. Note should be taken that when this cut is used the points are on different levels, meeting at the centre of the

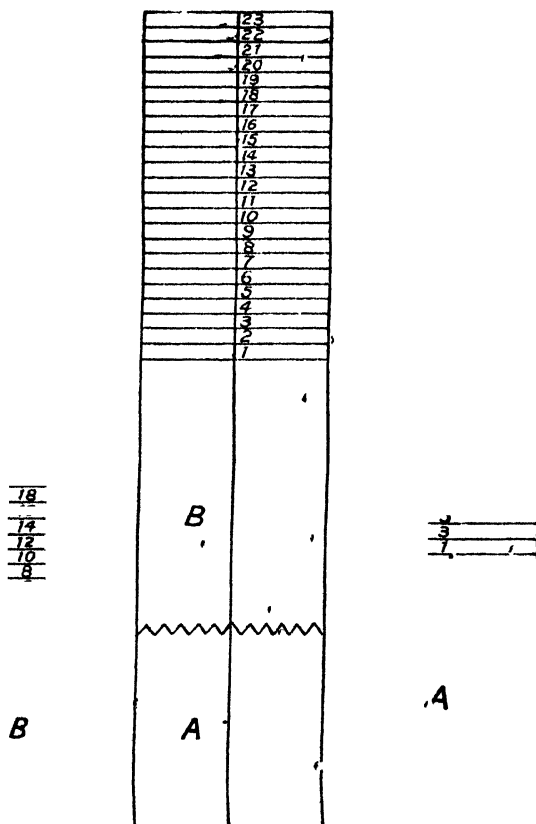


DIAGRAM 47

skin, whilst the last downward stroke ends at the side of the skin. This procedure is adopted as often as these cuts are required; long and tapering cuts are necessary.

Measurements should be used in ascertaining how

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- many cuts are required. Furthermore, when one cut is likely to displace the hair to too great an extent, it would be far better to adopt two cuts moving them half the distance.

Diagram 47 illustrates the method of placing two skins together to obtain a continuous flow of hair in the same direction, the whole to appear as one long skin. For the purpose of description two skins are dealt with, namely, A and B. A portion of A skin is removed at the point which matches the rump of B skin and is then sewn on. We next find a portion of B skin which matches the portion cut of A skin and remove same. The two portions remaining should, if the skins are perfectly matched, be as much like one as possible. They should then be stripped, commencing by placing the first strip of A skin on the piece of B skin, following by a strip of B skin placed above A strip. Then A strip on B again, and so on until completed. The seam joining the two larger portions of A and B skins should be vandyked. Any cuts for the length which may be required are made after this operation, as the seams are more likely to be broken and scattered. Cut to be made as diagram 44.

The principle of this method can be repeated when a number of skins have to be joined and the effect of a continuous flow is required.

CHAPTER XXI

SKUNK—(continued)

A FURTHER method of obtaining the same result, practised by many workers, is to find a point some $1\frac{1}{2}$ in. from the rump of the first skin, which is removed. It is sewn to the rump of the second skin, portions similar in size depending on the flow of hair are cut and sewn; thus the two skins are made to resemble one long skin. Portions are removed in a chevron form to minimise the possibility of seams showing.

In adopting this method, the two head pieces after the remainder of the skins have been sewn, will be found rather awkward in shape, one piece possessing almost a point, the other a squared edge; but cutting some 4 in. down the head of the squared edge, one will be able to insert the point of the uppermost portion. Diagram 48 shows this method carried out, the shaded corner at the head, depicting the waste cuts on completion, cuts for length to further break the seams, making them less visible are shown. Cuts as described in diagram 48 are preferable to cuts in diagram 46.

Diagram 49 gives a method of joining two skins without the rump joining the head in any one place. A and B skins are used for this method. A portion of A skin is found (diag. 50) which matches the rump of B skin. Furthermore, the portion of A skin will also be found to match the rump of A skin. After having secured the particular height of the hair, we commence with the portion of A skin which is joined to B skin, B skin remaining intact. The remainder

SKUNK

of A skin is cut into strips, No. 11 strip being placed on B skin, and No. 10 follows until No. 1 is reached. By this procedure we have reversed the places, and,

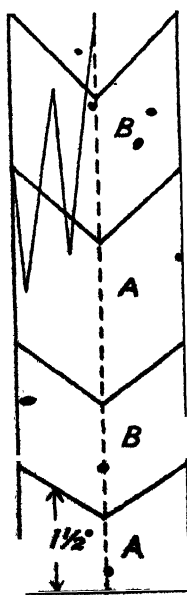
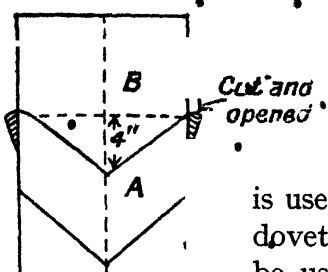


DIAGRAM 48

No. 1 will then be found to match the rump of A skin.

For joining the heads of skunk skins together, the Polish seam or dovetail seam is used. Diagram 51 describes the dovetail seam, which should always be used in preference. The object of this cut is to bring twice as many hairs to the square inch, which binds the hair together and makes the possibility of the ground showing less. Should the trouble of flat heads occur when skins are sewn side by side, as in diagram 62, a narrow half-inch strip, running downward as indicated by arrow, will tend to give one a cleaner edge.

In making the dovetail seam, Stage 1 in diagram 51, the leathers at the head are marked as diagram.

Stage 2, corners are removed and slits made as indicated.

Stage 3, one side is locked into the other, thus forming a seam, as diagram 51.

The method of leaving the corners on in the second stage is practised by many cutters with equal success,

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the object being to add a number of 'additional' hairs.

Diagram 52 gives a method of obtaining width in a skin, this cut will tend to widen the whole skin. A

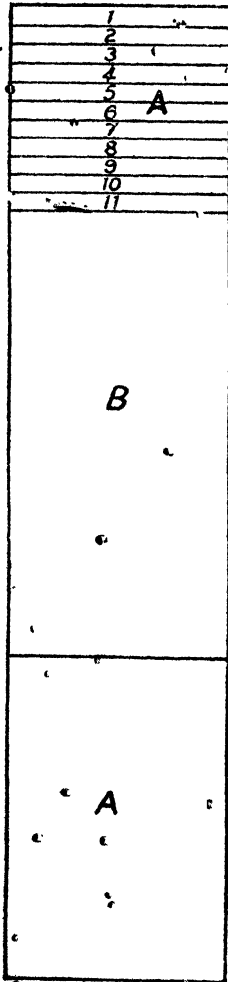


DIAGRAM 49

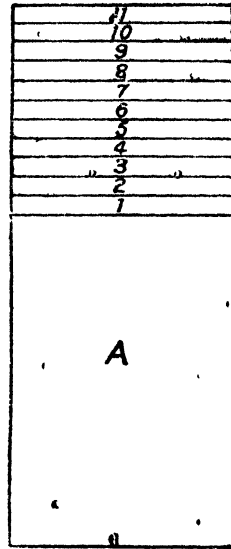
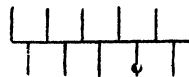
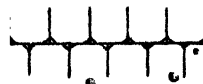


DIAGRAM 50



First Stage



Second Stage



Third Stage

DIAGRAM 51

SKUNK

•portion marked A, at the level of the two front paws, can be remedied by the addition of a further portion marked A at the rump. The hairs in both cases are similar, and this should only be done when extreme width is required. A further method which may be used with good results to obtain width is the following: Remove a portion from the head of the skin and insert below the front paws, in a splice fashion.

Diagram 53 is a method of obtaining a shaped effect. It will be seen that as much as possible of the natural shape of the skin is taken into consideration to avoid unnecessary cuts. The longer outside of the collar is obtained by a series of cuts which are pulled in length to the required shape. The inside is allowed to remain intact. Cuts are brought round to make up the shortage shown in diagram 53 by dotted lines. Diagram 54 shows a further method, the portion required is lettered A. Cuts are made in the manner shown, a corner being forfeited in each step. The inside cut is moved to markings. The result when completed is a wide collar-shaped effect.

In diagram 55 a means is given of obtaining a two skin collar, in which we avail ourselves as much as possible of the natural shape of the skin.

B skin (diag. 56), forming the outside of the collar is lengthened by means of a further cut which reduces the extreme width in the middle of the skin. A skin (diag. 57) is treated in the manner shown and forms the inside of the collar. The skins are split, half of A skin being placed with half of B skin. Should skin be different in size, the larger should take the position of B skin to facilitate the additional roundness. The finished effect is shown in diagram 55.

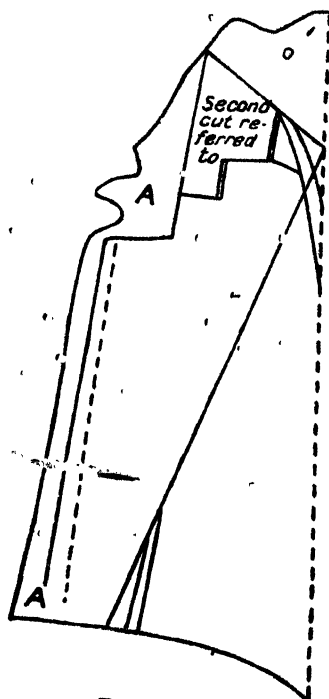


DIAGRAM 52

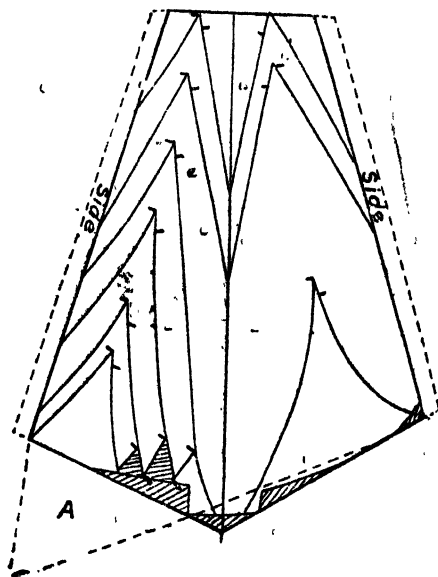
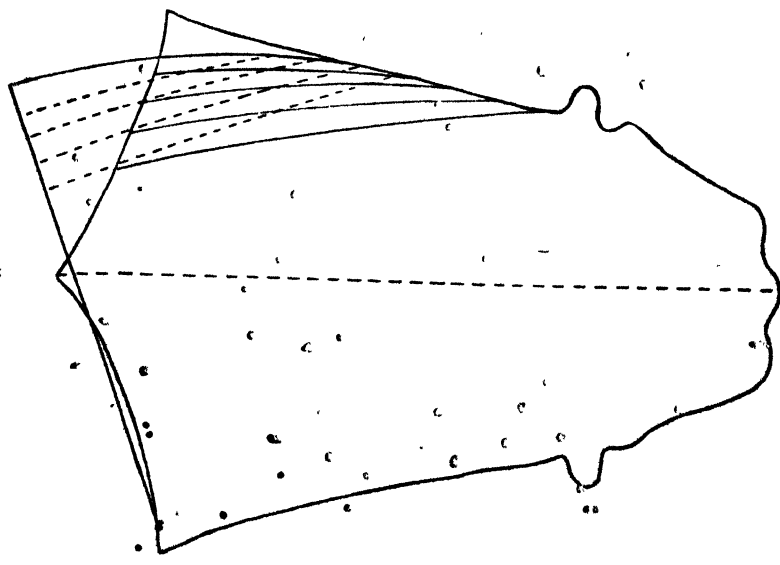


DIAGRAM 54



• • • DIAGRAM 53

SKUNK

- Diagram 52, furthermore, illustrates a method of obtaining exceptional width in the head of a skunk skin by means of a step-drop. This cut should be resorted to when extreme width is needed, and should be preferred to stretching, the head and neck being already very flat compared with the remainder of the skin. The diagram shows the unfinished effect of this cut. Note should be taken of the two arc cuts near the stripe which is lowered with the remainder of the skin. One should not use both methods on the same skin, the purpose of showing two methods in one drawing is to dispense with one plate.

A method of stranding worthy of note is given in diagram 58. This enables one to join the head to the rump of the skin by means of a straight seam, after applying the Vandyke cut. The method indicated has a two-fold advantage. In the first place it permits of a stranded effect being obtained without cutting the skin, as shown in diagrams 47 and 48. Secondly, the wide rump of the skunk skin is narrowed down without the introduction of many seams. After the centre of the skin has been marked and the sides lowered to the level indicated in diagram 58, sufficient of the rough rump of the skin is removed by means of an angular cut, to give the skin a new rump formed by the flatter sides. This rump, it will be found, matches well with the head of the skin. This particular method emphasises the great care which should be given to the matching of skins in the first place, for not only have the colour and pile to be matched, but the cutter should foresee exactly how the skins will be transformed during the process of work, and thus take care that the heads and the sides

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at the rump match well. Diagram 59 shows the means of obtaining exceptional width by a new method. Cuts are clearly shown, shaded portions being removed. In adopting this method corners must be

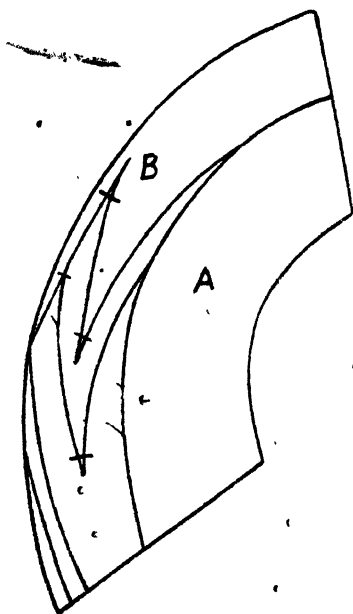


DIAGRAM 55

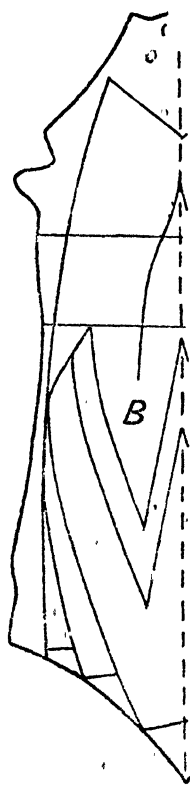


DIAGRAM 56

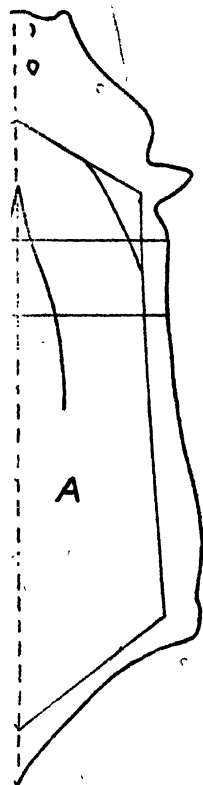


DIAGRAM 57

forfeited. Diagram 60 illustrates a method of obtaining exceptional width at the rump. The cuts should commence at the point shown on diagram, shaded corners must be forfeited. A method of making a barrel muff is next taken. The difficulty which a worker is faced with is that the skins are too large,

SKUNK

four skins, being sufficient to be placed round the muff. In order to carry the work out satisfactorily, eight skins should be made from the four. The method

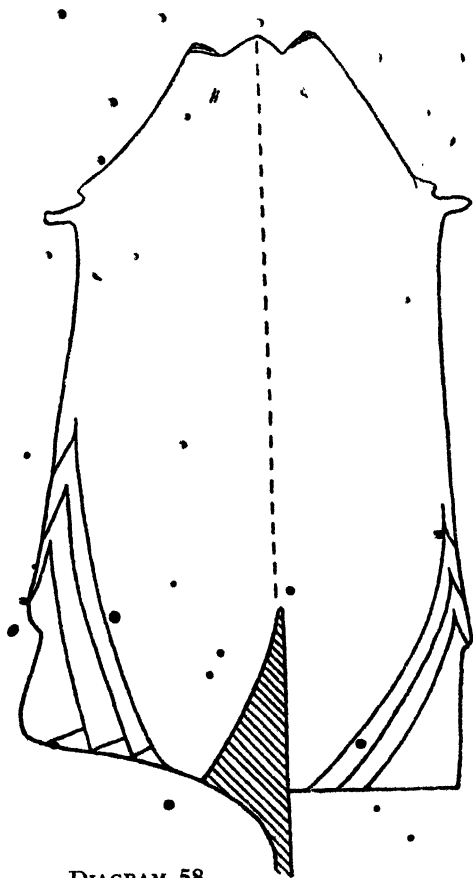


DIAGRAM 58

practised on one skin will suffice for the remainder. Cut the skin into strips 1-14 on each side of the centre, Nos. 1 and 1 (not stripped) forms the centre of one of the new skins, 2 and 2 forms the second centre. The first skin will be comprised of strips

FURS AND FURRIERY,

numbered 13, 11, 9, 7, 5, 3, 1, 1, 3, 5, 7, 9, 11 and 13. The second skins Nos. 14, 12, 10, 8, 6, 4, 2, 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12 and 14. This is repeated in all the eight skins. The ordinary procedure is then adopted to work eight skins into the barrel muff.

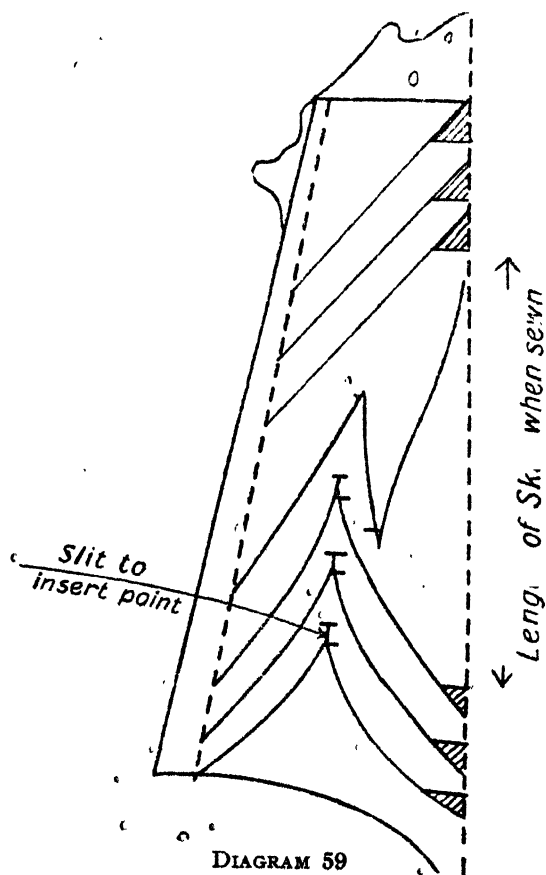


DIAGRAM 59

- Diagram 61 illustrates how a roll collar consisting of four skins may be obtained. Two of the skins placed as in the diagram will form half the collar. After the rump of the first skin has been inserted into the head

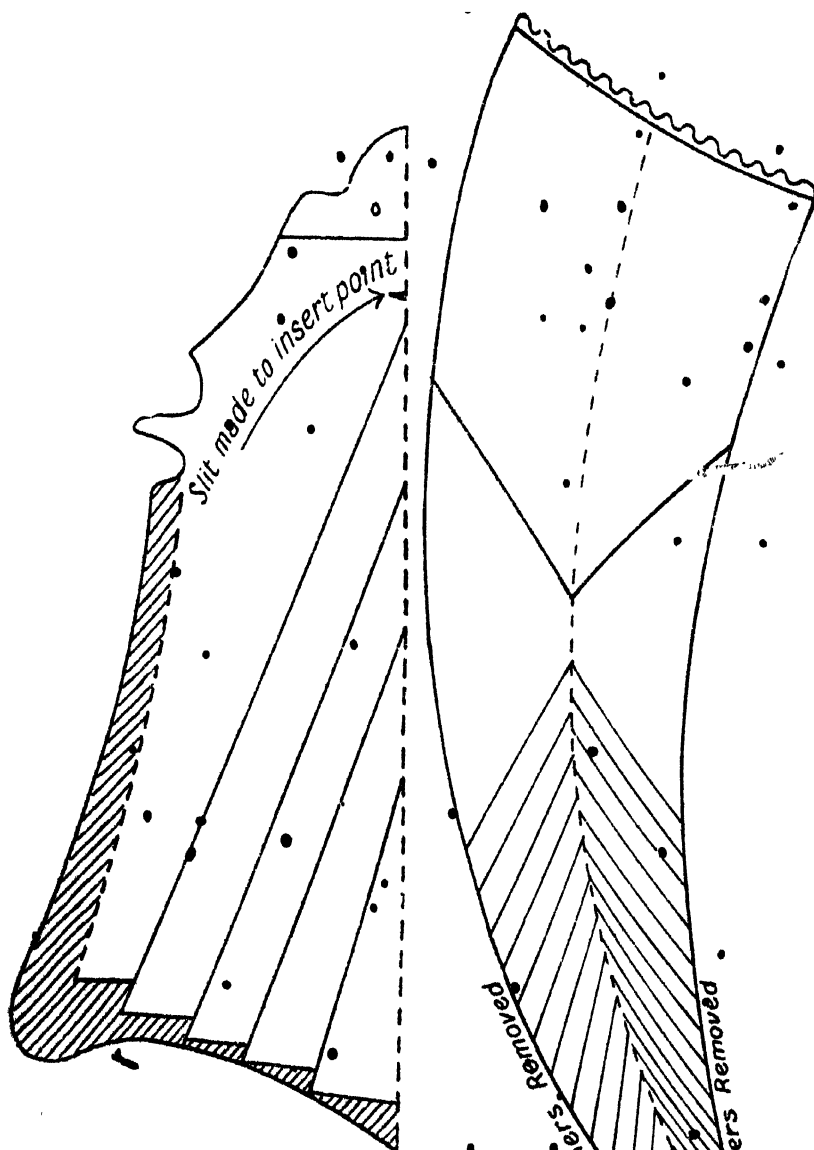


DIAGRAM 60

Corners Removed

Corners Removed

DIAGRAM 61

FURS AND FURRIERY

of the underneath skin, the extreme rump is thinned down by means of a number of cuts indicated in the diagram. This results in the required shape being obtained and the objectionable corners excluded from the article. Cuts may be made the reverse way.

The same method is repeated for the other half of the collar. The heads at the back of the collar are then joined by a dovetail seam and nailed in one.

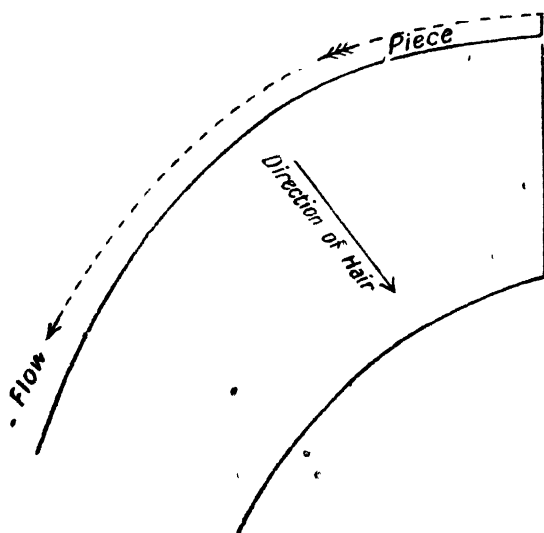


DIAGRAM 62

- The cutter should instruct the nailer to pull the points of the collar to the fullest extent.

A number of methods have been given in the working of skunk, but it is of course left to the cutter to choose the most suitable one for the particular article he has in hand. His choice should be influenced by how he believes the article will appear on the hair side on completion. The cutting over principles of

SKUNK

sable, if carefully carried out, can be practised on skunk with good results.

Nailing.—The chief points in the nailing of skunk skins will be found to be similar to those described on page 86, SABLES.

It should be noted that although there is no pronounced stripe in the skunk skin, it must still be perfectly straight.

A solution, composed of 1 oz. of spirit black mixed with $\frac{1}{2}$ gall. of methylated spirits will make an effective dye. It should be used on the leather side of the skin, which will have the effect of darkening the leather and which will, in turn, minimise the possibilities of the white floor of the skin showing (see formula, page 354).

The application should be made after sewing, allowed to dry, and the skin then damped for nailing; or alternatively be applied while the article remains on the board, the dye drying with the skin.

To straighten off the skin after nailing the extra width must be allowed, for on the leather side to bring the hair to the same width at the head as at the rump. Stretching should be obtained from the centre and not from the sides. For further points on NAILING see page 58.

CHAPTER XXII

MINK

French : *Vison*. German : *Nerz*.

Natural History, Etc.

THE mink is a member of the weasel family, being the largest animal of that particular group.

It is found in North America and parts of Alaska, ~~the finest~~ specimens being obtained from Nova Scotia. A good medium type is procured from Alaska, the poorest quality coming from the South.

In appearance the skin ranges in colour from the darkest brown to the palest shade. It varies in quality from a beautiful high piled skin to an extremely flat specimen. The full piled dark skins are considered the most valuable.

The animal is from 8 to 20 in. in length, the average measurement of the tail being about 8 in.

The Russian mink, coming from Siberia, is of a medium size. It lives in and out of the water, feeding mainly on the fish which it captures while swimming. When unable to get to the water, it feeds on mice and poultry.

It has a pale spot under the throat, as well as two distinctive marks on each side of the head. The period of the year in which the animal is trapped has a great influence upon the type of skin which is obtained. When trapped early in the year, a poor quality is obtained, as the skin has not had an opportunity of reaching its full beauty. Those trapped, however, in December until the end of

MINK

- January give us the finest type, the skins then being full furred.

To leave the trapping of mink over too late in the year would result in the spoiling of the coat for the following reasons. In the severe weather the animal finds it difficult to obtain food, and passes through any crevice or hole it may espy in search of a meal. This squeezing through places which are a close fit results in the silky top hair, which constitutes the chief beauty of the skin, being destroyed.

Again, lack of food causes the animal to become badly nourished, to the detriment of its coat.

If the mink is caught late in the spring the colour is light, as the shade deepens with the increase of the year.

The animal emits a bad-smelling fluid which is highly objectionable to some, but is not considered nearly as bad as that emitted by the skunk.

The litter is usually six.

When pursued by its enemies, it seeks refuge in the water.

Mink skins are worked into muffs, collars and coats, making most beautiful and lasting articles, the tails being used either as an ornamental fringe or worked into separate articles, according to the fashion of the day.

The skins are sorted in the following manner in the London sales—

1st Ex. Large.—A fine mink in size and quality of pile, full and good, colour dark.

1st Large.—A skin not as large as those referred to above, but still larger than an ordinary mink skin.

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1st.—Quality in this class of the best, but size ordinary.

1st *Small*.—The quality of those above, but small in size.

1st and 2nd.—A combination of first quality with second because of insufficient quantities.

2nd.—The quality of the second grade, not so full in pile or clear in pelt.

3rd.—A poor summer skin, dull on the leather, low in the pile, or a skin of any of the above classes possessing faulty parts.

4th.—Still poorer grade of skin, of which many are valueless.

The separate class of skins referred to as *pale* (those of a light shade) are classified in many cases in separate groups and referred to as 1st *pale*, etc.

Practical Work

The first step in the working of minks is the careful matching of the skins, as these are used in their natural state, and therefore vary a great deal.

The underneath of the skin is then slit up, and is laid flat upon the board. On examination we find that the hair of the mink skin runs pretty regularly from head to rump. It is darkest in the centre of the skin, shading lighter to the sides, the sides being the flattest parts of the skin.

The front paws of the skin are then removed; diagrams 63 and 64 give two methods of this process. In diagram 63 the paw is cut carefully away, leaving no more material one side of the paw than the other. In diagram 64 the paw is cut on the underneath, stretched, and removed.

MINK

- Very poor flat skins are usually worked into coat linings, while the superior minks are used for coats, muffs and ties.

The following points are to be studied when making linings : Every available fragment of the skin should

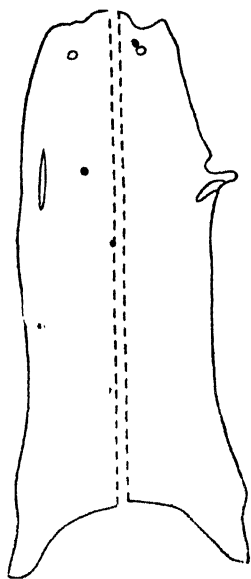


DIAGRAM 63

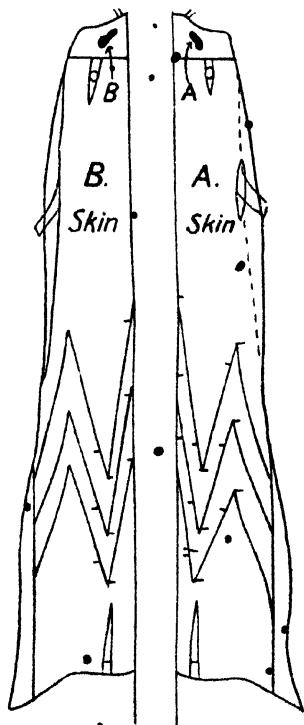


DIAGRAM 65

be used. When removing the front paws, the method as described in diagram 63 should be adopted. The head should be scalloped and the rump hollowed, each skin fitting into another.

When working the better quality minks, the centre of the skin should be carefully marked. Cuts required for lengthening a skin are found in diagram 65. These

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can be repeated as often as is found necessary. Cuts should be made long and tapering. Many cutters reverse the method of cuts, making them in an upward direction.

The objectionable pieces underneath the tail of the skin are removed as per diagram 65. Remove as much of the sides as can be spared.

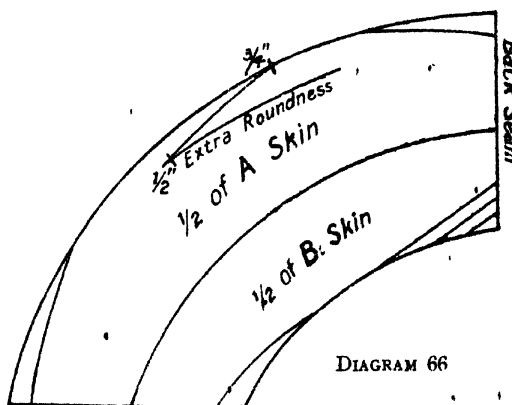


DIAGRAM 66

Diagram 66 gives us a method of making a two-skin mink collar. For this purpose two skins have been procured which have been marked A and B respectively. We will assume that B skin is the smaller of the two, and it will therefore form the inside of our collar. The outside of the collar is formed from A skin, which has been split. If worked as per diagram 67, we obtain a collar in which we have availed ourselves of the natural shape of the skins as far as possible and at the same time have obtained perfection in matching. It will be noticed that an additional cut is made in skin A to obtain

MINK

- further sweep. Full advantage should be taken both of head and rump.

Diagram 68 illustrates the making of a two-skin muff. It will be noticed that the skins have been

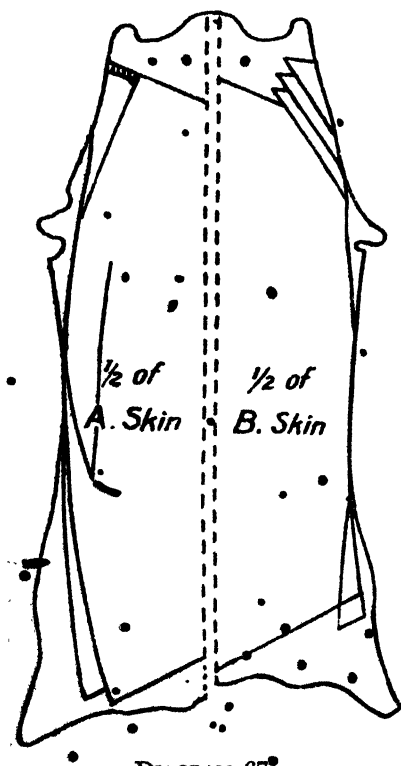


DIAGRAM 67

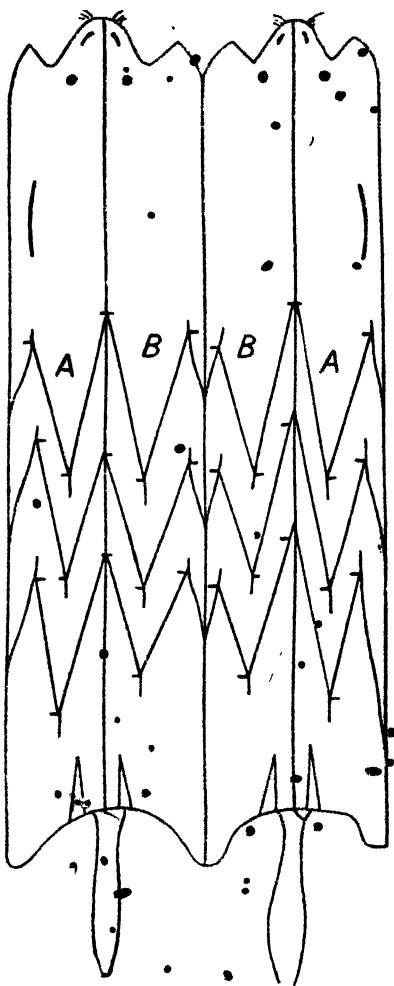


DIAGRAM 68

dropped in the length after carefully working to measure. It is assumed that the general principles in preparation, previously mentioned, have been carried out. It will be noticed that as much of the skins as possible is used. To help us in the matching,

we have split them. The skin shown on diagram 65 represents the two halves of one skin for muff on diagram 68. Cuts may in this case also be reversed.

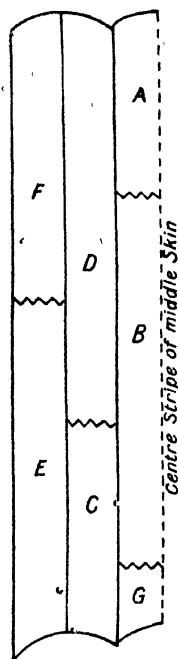


DIAGRAM 69

A very small type of skin is often come across. These are very difficult to work up to advantage as they are so short. Diagram 69 shows us how five small minks are placed together, forming a muff three skins wide. The skins are all split and lettered in accordance with our diagram which represents half the muff. B skin (diag. 70) forms the centre of the muff, portions that match from A skin (diag. 71) and G piece (diag. 72) make the length. Half of D skin (diag. 73) is joined on each side of the centre skin, length being obtained by the addition of C skin

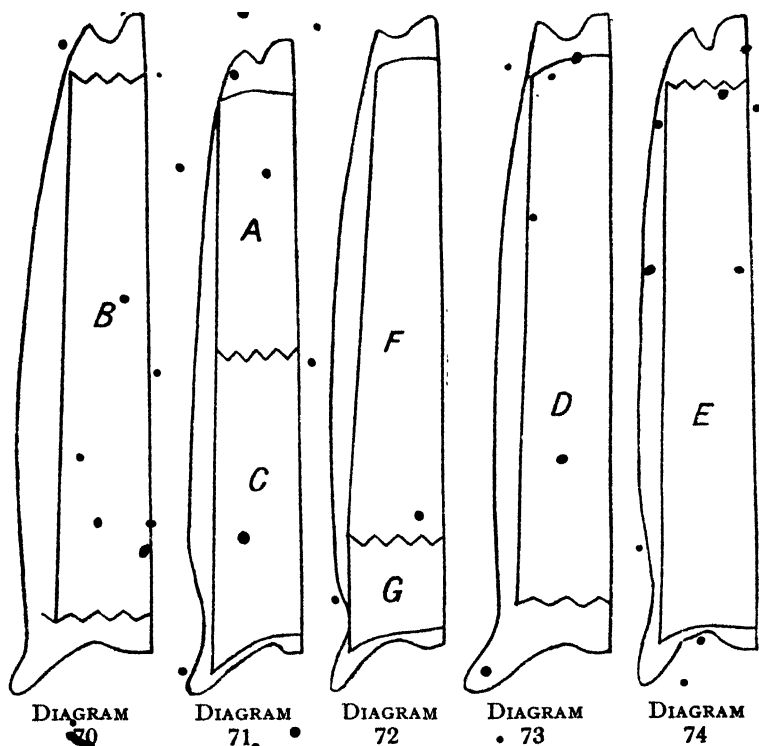
(diag. 71). F skin and E skin (diag. 72 and 74) are joined in the length, being then split and joined respectively to D and C half-skins. A vandyke seam is used for the joining of any conspicuous seams. Diagrams 70 to 74 depict half skins.

Minks being extensively used nowadays for coats, three methods are given below for the placing together

MINK

- of mink skins. After the skins have been carefully matched, cutting is commenced.

Method No. 1 shall be our first process. This is adopted when one wishes each skin to stand out distinctly. The rump is hollowed in the manner



shown, the head being inserted. Great care should be used in joining the heads and rumps, attention being paid to the seams. This method is greatly favoured in coat linings.

Method No. 3 is used when a uniformity of appearance is desired, the coat looking as near as possible as though one skin were used in the length. After

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selecting a point about the level of the front paws, which matches the rump of the top skin, this is removed. The removal of the part to the point named

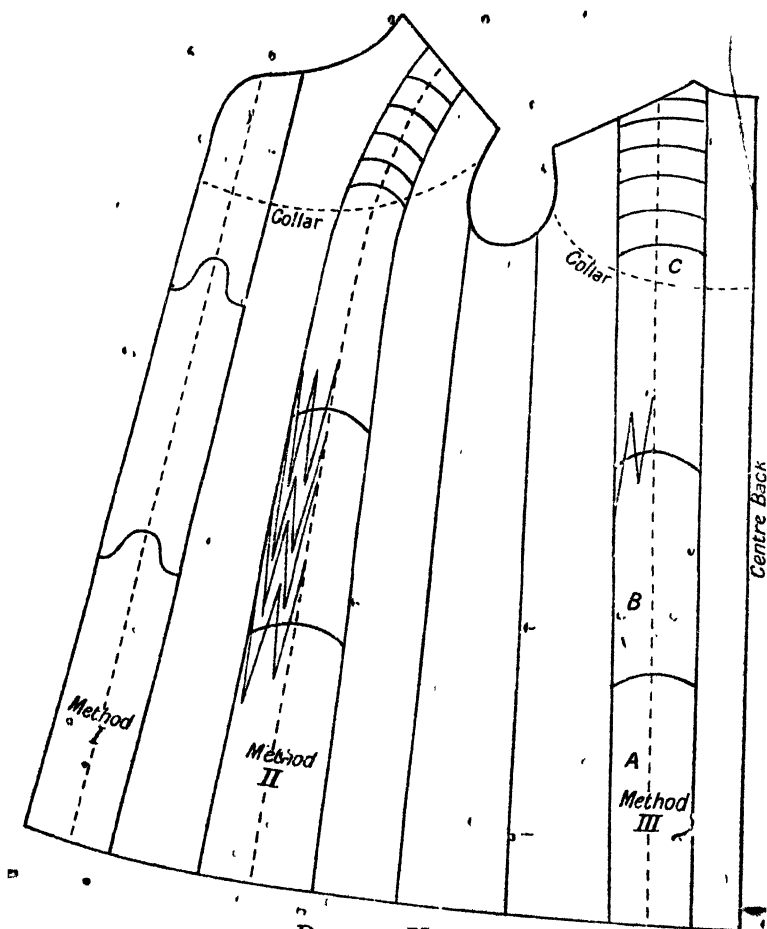


DIAGRAM 75

is then repeated in each skin. They are then placed as in diagram 75. In order to improve the appearance of the coat, cuts are made as described in diagram 75, method 2. These tend to make the whole much

MINK

narrower, which, as earlier explained, helps to beautify the garment. Many more skins are used in the width, and fewer needed in the length.

Method 3 treats with all the skins as Method No. 2, excepting that the extreme length is not required, a cut being applied as shown enabling us to lose the cross seams. A whole skin will run down the centre of the back, the remaining parts of the garment being made on the same lines, using the various methods as they are required.

The mink skin lends itself to elaborate work, and, although the subject of making a pair of gloves from two mink skins is a very advanced one, it will serve to show the possibilities of working such a skin (see diag. 76). The stripe of the skin should appear on all fingers of the glove and this should be procured from one skin. To effect this, the skin should be treated in the ordinary way so far as the undesirable part previously mentioned is concerned. It should be stretched in the width to the utmost extent, after which it will be found that the stripe of the skin will extend to a certain width. The length of the glove is assured as the skin is really longer than is necessary. The stripe is carefully cut in five equal portions. The remainder of the skin is cut into strips of about $\frac{1}{4}$ in. wide. Stripes are lettered A, B, C, D and E in diagram.

For the sake of clearness the strips of fur are numbered 1 to 10 Right side, and 1 to 10 Left side.

The procedure is as follows—

Strips 1 R and 6 R are joined together, similarly 1 L and 6 L, and these two pieces are placed on either side of C stripe. Strips 2 R and 7 R and 2 L and 7 L

FURS AND FURRIERY

are treated in the same manner and attached to D stripe. B stripe is next taken in conjunction with 3 R and 8 R and 3 L and 8 L. A stripe and E stripe

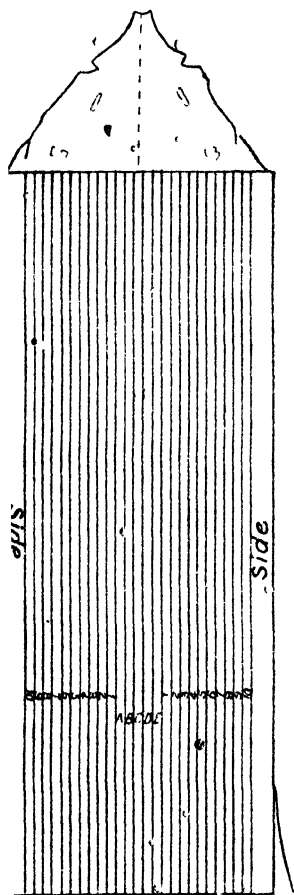


DIAGRAM 76

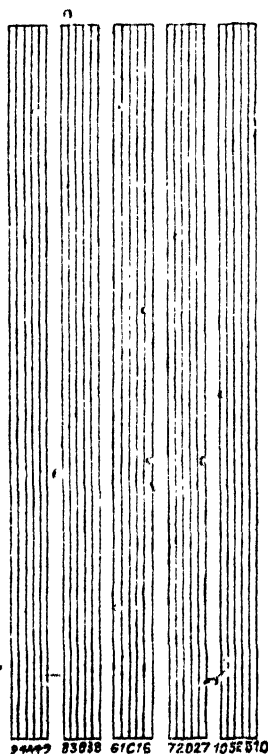


DIAGRAM 77

are then treated in turn, the above order being followed with all stripes, which means that 9 LR, 4 LR join A stripe, whilst E is sewn to strips 5 L and R, 10 L and R.

MINK

- This method will give the cutter five strips to each finger, continuing to the wrist, as in diagram '77.

It must be clearly understood that this procedure is only given as a demonstration of what complicated cuts may be employed successfully in the working of the mink skin. Further methods of working mink skins can be found under the heading of *SABLE*, page 65.

Nailing.—In the nailing of mink skins, care should be taken that the centre of the skin is kept well in the middle.

If the stretching of an article, either in the width or length, is left to the discretion of the namer, he should bear in mind that better results are obtained by stretching in the length.

The usual points in nailing should be observed (see page 58).

CHAPTER XXIII

STONE MARTEN

French : *Fouine*. German : *Steinmarder*.

Natural History

THE colour of a stone marten varies from the darkest shade of brown to the lightest shade in fawn. The underground is pale and often purple-like in colour. It has a darker centre stripe which gives it added beauty. The animal is covered with a silky, thick-piled covering.

The skin is a member of the marten family. It is about 26 in. in length and has a long tail which, although coarse, is still pretty in appearance.

The animal generally makes its home on rocks and places which are uneven and stony. It is recognised by the outstanding white mark under the throat. It is found in Russia, Germany, and various parts of Asia. Beech Marten is another name by which this animal is known.

Practical Working

On carefully examining the stone marten and noting the variations of the pile, one will find that it is rather flat at the head and that the depth of the hair rises until it reaches the level of the front paws, where it again becomes slightly flatter. From this point the flow of the hair improves until the extreme rump is reached where it is at its best. The pile rises on both sides of the centre stripe becoming flatter towards the sides, the flattest parts being the extreme sides.

The throat of the skin, which is white, should be removed in the process of the work.

STONE MARTEN

- Stone marten skins are selected for an article after being carefully matched, care being taken that this point is studied so far as concerns the surface and underground as well as the pile. The colour varies considerably — from the palest shade to the darkest brown.

The skin should be opened along the belly and stretched flat. By slightly damping the skin and stretching either in the width or length, according to the article which has to be made, the cutter will be able to determine how much material is at his disposal.

Skins should be carefully marked down the centre as well as the sides. Tails, heads and paws, should not be removed if they are to appear on the finished article.

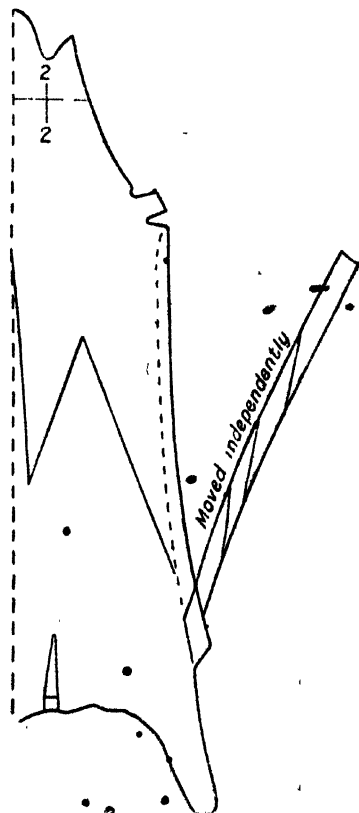


DIAGRAM 78

Diagram 79 illustrates a method of removing the white neck of the skin, and diagram 78 shows how the head may be removed if, for some unforeseen reason, this becomes necessary (for mounting by a naturalist).

FURS AND FURRIERY

If the head is not required, sufficient of the flatter head of the skin should be cut away in the working, as any flat parts worked into the article will not tend to improve its appearance.

Diagram 79 gives a method of widening the neck of the stone marten, which is often found to be a knotty point in the working, particularly after the white neck has been cut away.

This is a method which is applied when the head

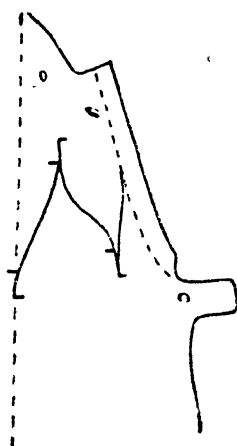


DIAGRAM 79

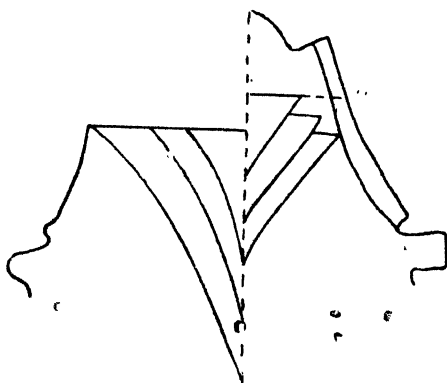


DIAGRAM 80

of the skin is required on the completed article. The shape of the cut should take the form as illustrated, and, although only one cut is given, this may be repeated two or three times if necessary. Both the finished and unfinished state are given.

Diagram 80 is a method which is adopted when the head of the skin has been removed and the neck is required of greater width. This cut again may be repeated as often as is found essential.

Diagram 78 shows a method whereby the undesirable

STONE MARTEN

point under the tail may be done away with by means of a tongue.

Diagram 78 furthermore shows how a skin may be lengthened. It will be noticed that the sides have been cut and left hanging, whilst the necessary work is being carried out on the remainder of the skin. On the required length being obtained the sides are sewn back in position after being independently lengthened.

The cut for the length should be made long and tapering and should be in the position indicated.

This cut may also be repeated as often as necessary, not forgetting that measurements should always be borne in mind in order to avoid unnecessary cuts.

The pelt of the stone marten is rather pliable, and one is always able to obtain the necessary width by stretching. Cuts are seldom used for this purpose.

Having treated with the general points in the working of the stone marten, further references should be made to SABLE, page 69.

The principles are the same, taking into account what has already been mentioned on the subject of the stone marten skin.

In any joining skin that occurs one may safely use the Vandyke seam, when it is desired that the seam should not show.

The purposes to which stone martens are put are for the making of collars, stoles and muffs, rarely, if at all, for coats.

In the nailing of stone marten, the general points dealt with in sable, on page 86, are applicable.

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BAUM (OR PINE) MARTEN

French : *Martre de Prusse*. German : *Edel* or *Baum Marder*.

Natural History

This variety reaches us in quantities from Russia, Norway, Switzerland, and various parts of Europe. The colour varies from dark brown to yellow with orange marks (spotted) under the throat.

Its length is about 26 in., quality is usually good, thick and close. It resembles the stone marten to a great degree, its deciding feature being the throat.

It is known to be a fine climber and seeks trees as a hiding-place from its enemies.

The lighter shades of baum marten are dyed and resemble sable, etc., in appearance.

For cutting, nailing, etc., see *STONE MARTEN*, page 160, and *SABLE*, page 69.

CHAPTER XXIV

• MARMOTS

French : *Marmotte*. German : *Murmel*.

Natural History, Etc.

THE marmot, which is 1 ft. to 18 in. in length, comes in the greatest quantities from Russia, China, Switzerland and the mountainous districts of Northern Europe, generally. It makes its home in mountainous districts, usually some thousand feet above the sea level. There it burrows to a depth of some 8 ft., making an exit in case of attack by its enemies. The colour of the skin is yellow to brown, sprinkled with hairs of a darker shade. The finest are of a bluish hue and known in the trade as "blues." These skins take the dye far better than the yellowish varieties.

All marmots are dyed, many shades resembling finer furs, including mink, sable and blue musquash dyes.

When attacked, it gives notice of the danger to its companions by whistling, and is known to post sentries at different points to keep an outlook for enemies. It is of an hibernating nature. Late in September it retires to its burrow, and remains there during the winter.

The price of the skin varies from 4s. to 5s. normally ; as much as 10s. being paid in 1919.

When in the raw state the following descriptions are given to the various qualities.—

1st Blue.—Best quality skins of a full pile and blue in colour.

FURS AND FURRIERY

2nd Blue.—Skins poorer in pile but blue in colour.

1st Yellow.—Skins of a yellowish tint but quality of the best.

2nd Yellow.—A poorer skin of a yellowish shade.

3rd Yellow.—Poor, half-seasoned, and often shedding its coat, with two separate heights in the pile.

Practical Work

With good workmanship, this particular skin can be made into a beautiful article. All depends upon the labour put into it. In the hands of an unskilled man, it becomes most indifferent.

Softness of both pelt and skin must be secured, with hair freely flowing.

The marmot pelt will be found pliable and rather thick. We will procure, therefore, a knife with a blunt edge, as diagram 81. The knife is fixed to the wall, the worker standing in front of the blunt edge of the knife, passing the skin on the pelt side across the knife several times. If one is unable to obtain this knife, a piece of wood with a smooth, blunt edge pressed over the pelt will help us get the utmost stretch out of the skin. It must be borne in mind that all this stretching must be done in the centre of the skin and not on the sides. Attempting to stretch the sides will make the little that could be utilised of no use, the sides being thinner in the hair, and stretching would naturally distribute these hairs over a greater area. When referring to side, we do not of course include that extreme portion which has in all cases to be removed. Care must be taken that enough of the side is removed, any thin sides included in the garment show much more in the after-nailed

MARMOTS

- state. Preparation of this nature is necessary before cutting.

The head and end of rump are both removed. The skin, being a pliable one, as already stated, it will be found that only cuts as in diagram, 82 are necessary,

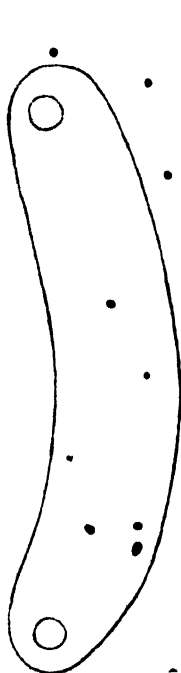


DIAGRAM 81

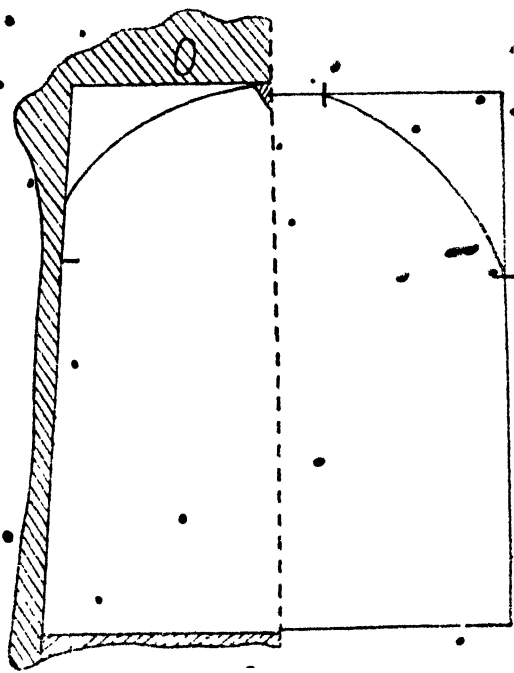


DIAGRAM 82

these being for the purpose of widening the head, which is narrower than the remainder of the skin. Any elaborate cuts should be avoided, as the pile is not very high, excepting in the case of the Torbigarnar marmot. The skins should be sewn finely, and in all cases where one skin is joined to another, the pile and the shading of the hair should be carefully studied.

In making a garment of marmot some thirty

FURS AND FURRIERY

skins carefully matched, should be procured. Although the marmots in question have been dyed together, and by the same dyer, difference is sure to occur in colour due to the effect of the dye on the different skins. Quality and hardness should also be taken into consideration in matching.

Having secured the thirty skins, we choose the softest and best for prominent parts of the coat, working the harder skins at the bottom of back and front, the part least visible.

Skins are treated in the manner indicated, being cut as diagram 82 if necessary, using the Vandyke seam if warranted. Hair flows down in the garment.

Skins with a blemish likely to show when sewn should not appear in any prominent part of the garment.

The edges of a coat should be good, the sides being cut well away; for, in marmot, the sides look doubly bad when appearing at the edge of a coat and also wear quickly.

Marmots are usually dyed to imitate the better furs, such as sable, mink, or blue musquash. As the dye is not similarly effective in each skin, various tints appear which must be carefully matched. The best covered skins should be selected for the prominent parts of the article manufactured. The unpopularity of the marmot as a skin adaptable to coats is mainly due to the hardness of the pelt; if this can be overcome, and the fine dyes applied, a great future can be foreseen for the marmot.

Seams should be carefully watched, laying over seams applied whenever necessary.

If a garment is being made and the worker able to

MARMOTS

remove a good head and rump, Vandyke seams may be applied; but only when the possibility of any seams showing is small.

As stated elsewhere, if seams must show, it is far better that straight seams should appear than the Vandyked variety.

Nailing and Finishing of Article.—The nailing of the article should be carefully done, and again the necessity is impressed of only stretching the middle of the skin, allowing the sides to be as free as possible. No artificial heat should be used in drying, as the marmot is likely to become brittle owing to the dyes used. The garment should be hammered at the seams to flatten same before removal from the board. After removal, the article should be set with a brush dipped in cold water, brushing the right way of the hair. A hot iron is then passed across in the same direction. The hair is then flipped back the reverse way with the hand whilst the steam ascends. It should then be set the reverse way of the hair, ironed this way also, and then allowed to dry.

This method was once practised in Germany where the working of marmots was a great feature, and gave wonderful results as far as freeing the hair and improving the quality of the skin is concerned.

Further points on nailing, see page 58. Finishing of garments, page 344.

CHAPTER XXV

RABBIT

* French : *Lapin*. German : *Kanin*.

Natural History

IN the trade, rabbits are also known by the name of coney. They come in vast quantities from Belgium, France, Australia and China, smaller quantities coming from other parts of the Continent and England. Those termed Belgian rabbits are of the larger type, whilst those coming from Australia and surrounding parts are smaller. Skins coming from China are thin in the hair and small in size. The natural history of the bunny is quite common knowledge to all, and so we will not bore our readers with it.

Rabbits increase rapidly, those coming from New Zealand (grey in colour) are especially prolific. Some few years ago two pairs of rabbits were sent there ; to-day they have multiplied to some millions, descendants of the original two pairs.

Millions of rabbits are caught in Australia, some suitable for furriers' use termed Australian rabbits, whilst others are sold to felt makers.

The lynx and rabbit carry on a feud, the former animal attacking the latter for food.

The skins are offered in the three or four sales which take place yearly. They are submitted in the raw state and sold by the pound, the average weight of a dozen peltries is about 30 oz., according to origin. With regard to the rabbits hailing from Belgium and France, the bulk are sheared to various depths and

RABBIT

dyed, the 'better' class being specially treated, thus giving a lustre to the skin. This process is carried out in France. The object is to imitate the appearance of a sealskin as near as possible. They are bundled in dozens, with label signifying by whom they are manufactured (initials). They are usually marked according to size, 1x, 2x or 3x—3x representing the largest size. They are furthermore offered in the form of plates similar to seal musquash plates. The Australian rabbit is sheared and dyed in the same way, and resembles very closely seal musquash. The firm of C. and E. Chapal Freres & Co. (France) are noted for their beautiful work.

Rabbits are also dyed various shades, brown, mole or blue being favourites. The whiter rabbits are bleached and come into the market either in the hair or sheared. Another type of rabbit comes from China and when pure white resembles ermine, the hair being thin. These skins arrive bleached and contain a superfluous powder. They have to be sent to the cleaner before use.

Practical Work

The purposes for which rabbits are used are the following: coats, capes, muffs and ties.

The method of cutting is the same in all cases, whether we are treating with rabbit shorn or rabbit in the hair. As few seams as possible should be used, especially in the shorn coney. In order to touch upon all points, it would perhaps be advisable to describe the methods of working a coney (or rabbit) coat. Some forty skins are required for the purpose. These skins have been matched both in pile and in colour.

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In order to view rabbits to the best advantage when matching, the head should be towards the matcher. In this position the best possible view of the skin is obtained. The skins should be damped and each skin softened in its turn. At this stage of work, if the skin is handled in the softened state and made pliable, much better results are obtained.

It will be found that a number of skins run slightly harder on the pelt, which usually denotes a buckskin. The doeskins are, as a rule, much softer. It would be advisable to place the harder buckskins towards the bottom of a garment in preference to another part. Skins bearing any blemish should be placed in a less conspicuous part of the coat. The hair should flow in an upward direction in the case of sheared skins, which produces a better effect in the finished coat, also making it possible to set the hairs the reverse way.

Diagram 83 will illustrate the method which should be used in squaring the skin.

It will be noticed that the gill which is fuller and usually unshorn has to be removed to a distance, which brings the edge to the same level as the remainder of the skin. In the centre of the head, a bare place will be found, which varies in size in each particular skin. It will be found necessary to remove this portion, which should be done by either of the two cuts shown below. A cut should be used when the skin is needed in the length, B cut when the skin is needed in the width. Some workers cut damages V-shape and insert a piece which they remove from the top of the skin, but this is not considered to be the best method.

A further method, which is considered by far the

RABBIT

best and is utilised when the finest results are required, consists of removing the portion as far as the objectionable part, cutting it completely out. In this case no seams, other than the crossing seams, are necessary. The reason why this method is not invariably used is.

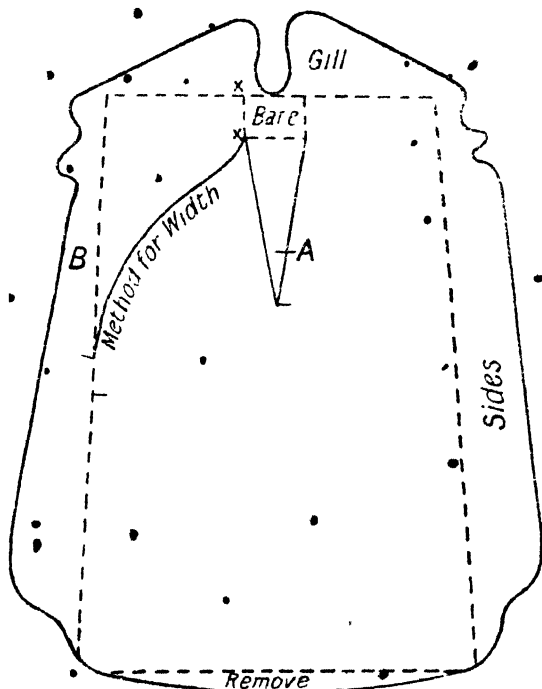


DIAGRAM 83

because more material is needed to carry the operation out. The extreme rump will furthermore be found to be irregular as compared with the remainder of the skin. A small portion should be removed.

We must next turn our attention to the sides of the skin, which previously formed the belly. These will be found to be bad and not fit for use with the

FURS AND FURRIERY

remainder of the skin. As much as is found necessary should be removed ; if the whole side can be removed the result will be better in the finished garment.

The skins having been moistened (previous to cutting), should at this stage be stretched, and their position in the garment carefully allotted. On placing the skins over the pattern, they should be vandyked, and care taken that each vandyke locks into the other.

Each skin will be treated in this particular way, sewn together by means of a Vandyke seam (the object of which is to give irregularity to the seam), lessening the possibilities of its showing. The skins can then be sewn together, care being taken that the skins in the rows are of the same length, so that on the completion of the garment, the Vandyke seam is continuous. The skins should be worked straight, and though there are no stripes or markings in a seal coney skin, this point should be carefully studied. In diagram No. 84 it will be seen that a half-row of skins is needed for the length. Care should be taken that this portion is well hidden under the collar. A whale skin forms the centre of the back.

Diagram 84 gives the position of each rabbit skin in the garment. The lower skins, it will be noticed, are widened, a cut being used as diagram 83*b*, whilst the top skins which are slightly narrower follow the method shown in diagram 83*a*. The result of the coat when complete should be that of a garment made from one huge skin. Diagram represents a coat made from unshorn rabbit and is worked hair down.

It is needless to state that the best skins should be placed in the most prominent parts, such as the

RABBIT

collar, cuffs, sleeves, down the middle of back and, lastly, the extreme front. That which constitutes a perfect skin is one on which no work in the manner of repairing need be done. Skins which need repair must be imperfect on completion. Furthermore, pile and lustre should be taken into consideration. The

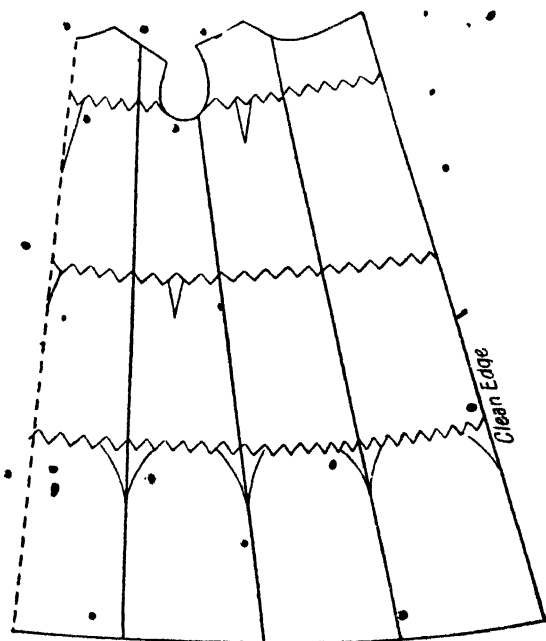


DIAGRAM 84

method of working shorn rabbits would be to reverse the positions of skins in diagram.

Nailing.—A coney coat requires damping with warm water since the pelt is of the heavy and thick type, and should be damped a little before the article is required for nailing. It should then be laid across the board, which we presume has been thoroughly

FURS AND FURRIERY

cleansed, since the lustre of the coney is liable to be interfered with by any chalk or dust on the board. The coat should be stretched as near as possible to the shape required. It should always be fastened from the shoulders and pulled in the length whenever possible with and not against the hair. This method will be found most satisfactory, since to pull the coat against the hairs will not give the freedom of stretch. On completion, the coat should be beaten and set the reverse way of the hair, thus giving freedom and flow. The softening knife, diagram 81, may be used to advantage. Combing and thorough beating completes.

CHAPTER XXVI

• OTTER

French : *Loutre*. German : *Otter*.

• *Natural History*

THE otter is found in various climates. The best known come from Europe, West Africa, India, South America and Rhodesia, etc.

The European otter was once found all over the United Kingdom, Devonshire giving us the largest numbers. It was occasionally found in the Thames; the otter is quite at home in the water. Its feet, which are web-like, afford great ease in swimming and diving: The otter pairs whilst under water. Its chief food consists of fish. In length it is 3 ft., and dark brown in colour, becoming lighter under the neck and belly, whilst down the spine it is at its darkest. Many are of a very fine chestnut brown, with a very light belly.

The otter is either used naturally or plucked. In the latter case, the underground, which is found to be very close-furred, is used. The coat is of a most durable nature, both in pile and pelt. A plentiful supply of otters is obtained from Canada, where they are bartered for other commodities.

The animal while in the water uses its tail as a helm.

The Chinese otter is a little over 24 in. in length. The colour is grey to brown. The top hairs are often pulled, leaving the undergrowth of close hair. This particular kind of otter is always inferior in quality.

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The West African otters are larger—in fact twice the size of the Chinese. They are pure brown in colour, but are only obtained in small quantities.

The otter hailing from India, measures a little over a foot in length and resembles the animal found in South America. The skin is, however, coarser in texture. The Cape otter is exceptionally rare.

The American otter varies in colour, according to the place from which it is obtained. Those which reach us from York Fort vary in colour from light to dark brown, the palest skins coming from Alaska. Those of East Maine are of a very dark shade, as also are those from Canada and adjoining territories.

SEA OTTER

French : *Loutre de mer*. German : *See Otter*.

Natural History, Etc.

The sea otter is in colour a beautiful lustrous black, with glistening silver hairs at intervals. It is also found in a plum colour of lighter and darker shades. The belly of the skin is very much lighter than the back. The animal is from 3 to 5 ft. in length. Specimens are often found exceeding 5 ft.

It is recognised as one of the most valuable and durable pelts in the trade. A few years ago sea otters were pretty numerous, but owing to careless trapping, the numbers are no longer so profuse.

It is found near the Western shores of Alaska and Kamschátka as well as near the shores of Japan. It is an amphibious animal, seldom leaving the water, except when the weather is very severe. It is shot at

SEA OTTER

from canoes when in the water, and clubbed when taking refuge on the shore. It breeds singly.

The otter is in great demand by the Russians, as the fur is much appreciated by them for its numerous excellent qualities.

The Court at Pekin also favour the sea otter, mandarin cloaks of the skins being used extensively.

The food consists chiefly of shell-fish.

In sorting otter skins the following classification is made in the raw state—

1st Ex. Large.—The largest found in the parcel which are of the best quality and of exceptional size.

1st Large.—Skin quality of those above, but not so large.

1st.—Ordinary size, but of the finest quality, clear in pelt.

2nd.—A second quality, one possessing imperfections which prevent it being included in Grade 1.

3rd.—The poorest class.

Cubs are referred to in the particular classes separately.

Practical Working

The otter skin, which is far more popular on the Continent than in this country, is used with few exceptions for the collar and cuffs of ladies' coats.

On examining the skin one finds that the pile of the hair runs regularly from end to end, the tail itself being of the same texture.

The otter should be classed amongst the better types of fur, but because of the flatness of the pile, elaborate work must be avoided. Simple cuts should be adopted, as will be seen in the following diagram.

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The pelt of the skin will be found strong and the skin very roomy. The head of the skin cannot be used further than the limits marked on the diagram.

The otter skin, as already stated, being used principally for collars and cuffs, diagram 85 gives a method whereby, one may obtain the desired effect with the simplest cuts.

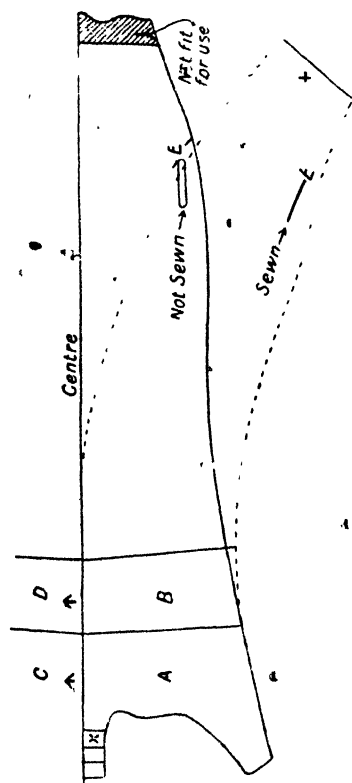


DIAGRAM 85

The skin taken for collar and cuffs is of the large variety. Portions marked A B one side and C D the other are removed from the rump of the skin. A should be joined to D and B to C. The result of this will give us a pair of cuffs. If the skin can be stretched the width of the two cuffs, it will be found necessary to use one portion now marked A and the other marked C, the two forming a pair of cuffs. The remainder of the skin is joined rump to rump, thus forming the collar.

Should a facing be needed the tail may be utilised for this purpose. It should be stretched in the width, split and joined on either side of the collar. Indication is made where the tail joins by X.

Should a collar and revers be required instead of

SEA OTTER

the collar as in diagram, the revers will be hair up in effect. In order to make collar and revers satisfactorily one should split the two skins necessary for the work after removing portions for cuffs from the rumps on the principle of diagram 85. Join half of one skin head to head, sides being worked nearest the inside of the collar, as diagram 85. The revers are made from the remaining two portions of the second skin, being finished with a facing.

The difficulty of using the tail as a facing may be overcome in the following manner—

A small portion should be removed from the head of the skin and joined to the tail, which will then form a better join to the point of the rever. This will be found necessary only when the revers are worked head uppermost.

The tail is stretched in the width, split and marked as diagram 85.

The centre of the skin should be marked before any operations take place and the front paws removed in the manner indicated in diagram 85 marked E. The paw is removed by a straight cut which is then sewn. See diagram.

In working the larger varieties of otter for similar purposes, it will be often found that the collar can be obtained from one skin only. In this case the skin is split and the heads joined, whilst the sides of the skin form the inside of the collar.

In the joining of heads of otter skins, in order to prevent the ground showing, three seams sewn closely together will meet the case.

order to deal with every point of interest in the working of otter skins, the subject of a coat made

FURS AND FURRIERY

from five sea otters will be found on diagrams 86, 87, and 88. The skins are slightly damped and stretched,

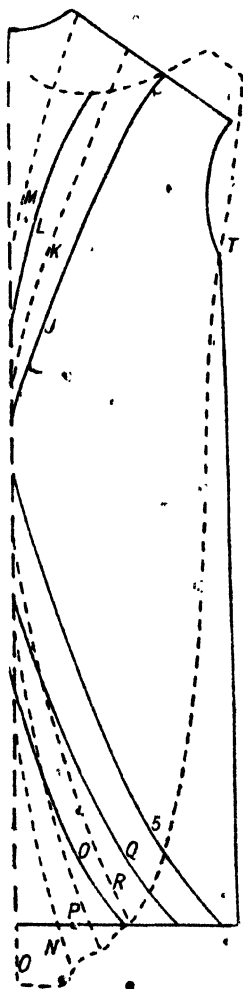


DIAGRAM 86

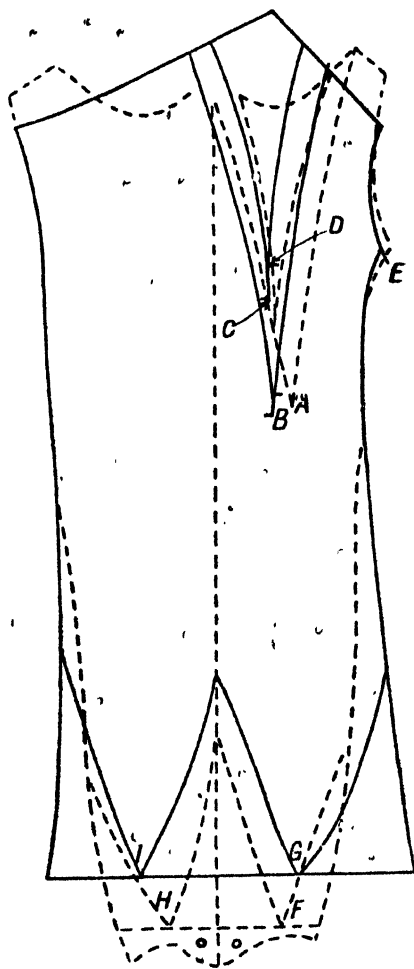


DIAGRAM 87

erring on the side of width or length according to the pattern (centres are marked). Diagram 86 shows back of the coat; cuts are defined by lettering. It

SEA OTTER

will be found that additional length is required at the extreme point of the back. L cut is moved to the position of cut M, while J cut takes the position of cut marked K. It will be found necessary to stretch point marked T in order to provide for the armhole, there being only one point now to consider, namely, that of additional width at bottom of the back. In order to overcome this difficulty cuts lettered O Q 5 are shifted to the new places of cuts marked N P R, the result giving us a shorter head and wider bottom to the coat. Two skins (forming the fronts of coat) are next dealt with as illustration No. 87. The shoulder of the coat is obtained by cuts lettered B and D. These are raised to the position of

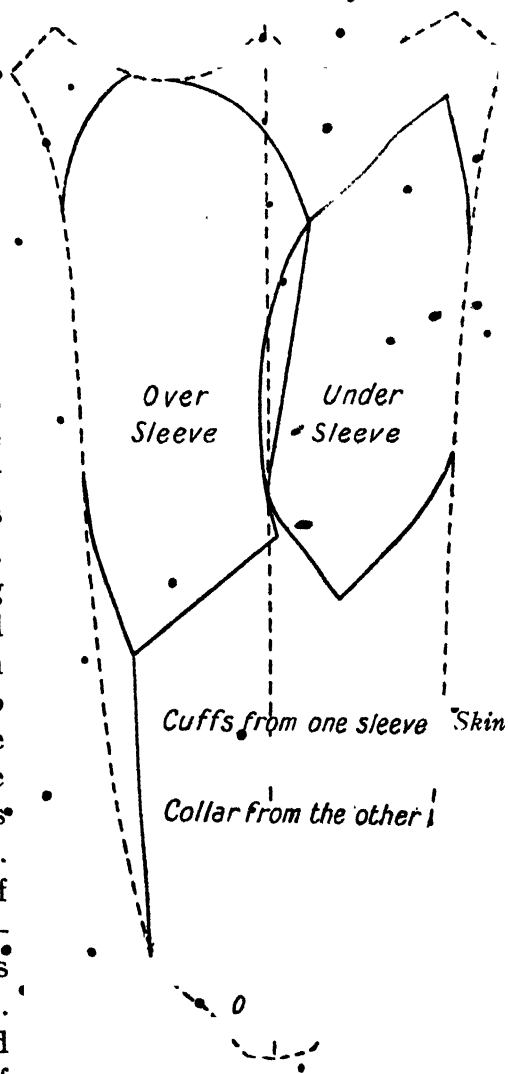


DIAGRAM 88

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lettering A and C. The position of armhole can be adjusted by stretching and is marked on diagram letter E. The bottom of the front is widened in order to obtain sweep, H to I position, F to G position.

The two remaining skins are cut, as shown in diagram 88. It will be noticed that top and under sleeve is removed from each skin whilst the cuffs and collar are obtained from the remaining parts of the two skins. It should have been previously stated that all skins must be of one colour, pile, and undergrowth. The hair is worked in the garment in an upward direction. Diagrams 86, 87 and 88 depict the method of working the coat, but one is only able to give a rough idea of what is required, the reason being that much is obtained by stretching.

For Nailing, see page 58.

CHAPTER XXVII

MUSQUASH OR MUSK-RAT

French : *Rat musque*. German : *Bisam*.

Natural History

THE musquash or musk-rat derives its name from the strong odour it exudes. Its length is from 7 to 14 in. ; this measurement, however, does not include the tail.

The musk-rat lives both in and out of the water, burrowing a habitation in the earth. It builds a home similar to that of the beaver, the composition being of sticks and mud.

It feeds on plants under the water and has therefore no reason to lay in a winter stock of food. The animal is said to be a fairly correct weather prophet, and, when it builds its home unusually high, it is taken by some as a sign that stormy and severe weather may be expected.

Most of the rats are caught in lowlands swept by the tide, huge quantities being trapped at one time. The drainage of any damp place will generally reveal the home of the musk-rat, and special laws are in existence in the United States of America as well as Canada for the protection of the habitations of these animals.

Three or four million skins are obtained annually from North America alone, despite the demands of civilisation, which is gradually encroaching on the waste land where the rat is obtained.

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The largest type of musquash comes from Canada. The skin is of great utility and very popular.

Its diet is strictly herbivorous. The colour of the skin varies from a reddish brown to a very dark brown; the finest specimens obtainable, however, are of a blue shade, different from musquash skins coming from other parts, and are more beautiful in appearance. The colour of the skin grows lighter in shade towards the sides until it reaches the belly, which is by far the lightest portion of the skin.

The word musquash originates from the Indian language.

The type of musquash—coming from the Southern States and known in the trade as the Southern musquash—is thicker in the pelt and flatter in the hair, whilst those obtained from the western districts—known as western musquash—are fuller in the hair and thinner in the pelt. The finest specimens reach us from Alaska. The animal is also found in Canada. Minnesota, California, Virginia, Pennsylvania, and the Red River Settlements send a huge quantity to market.

It is easy for a judge to determine from which part of the world a particular skin is obtained. The Alaska musquash is extremely small in size although so fine in quality, whilst Canada is responsible for the “blacks,” quantities also emanating from parts of the United States.

The musquash is usually trapped twice yearly; in the winter, when the coat is at its best, and in the autumn.

There are two glands near the tail containing a secretion from which the perfume musk is obtained.

The rats fight a great deal amongst themselves,

MUSQUASH OR MUSK-RAT.

biting one another severely. This accounts to a small extent for the holes so frequently found in the skins; in general the holes are due to shot.

The kitten musquash—which is, as the name signifies, the young musquash—is very small, being thin in the pelt and extremely tender; furthermore the pile is short.

The methods adopted by the warehousemen in defining the various qualities are the following—

1st Ex. Large.—The exceptionally large skins of the finest quality, clear pelts, and in general perfect.

1st Large.—Skins of the quality of those above, but not so large.

1st.—Skins of the quality of those above, but ordinary in size.

2nd Large.—Skins of second quality with pile not so full, size large.

2nd.—Quality of 2nd Large, but ordinary size.

1st Ex. Large Pale.—Quality and size of those above, but pale in shade.

1st Large Pale.—Quality and size of those above, but pale in shade.

1st Pale.—Quality and size of those above, but pale in shade.

2nd Pale.—Quality of 2nd, but pale in shade.

3rd.—A poor summer skin, dull and poor.

4th.—Defective skins of all grades, kittens, etc.

All classes are often referred to as *Pt. Pale*, which means that part of the skins are of the pale shade and part ordinary and are combined.

Lastly, the term “shot” is used with each classification signifying that the skins are possessed

FURS AND FURRIERY

of holes, the grades depending on the number of same.

Practical Working

Natural musquash may be put to the following uses with advantage: Ties, muffs, coats and coat linings.

The matching here will be found to be a most important point, as the colour of the skins varies so much. Should a couple of badly-matched skins be placed into a garment, they would spoil the whole effect. In order to match to the best possible advantage, the cutter should stand higher than usual and look well into his skins. As so many skins are required for the making of a coat, it is necessary that a system should be adopted in order that the worker should not have to handle the skins more than is necessary. The method of pairing the skins is considered to be the best. Let us say that 200 skins are handed to the cutter. His duty is to handle each skin once only, and in so doing he should sort them into 100 pairs, each pair being the same colour and size. Pairs are then matched as near as possible so that the cutter has 50 sets of four to deal with. It will be seen that this process will facilitate the work of the cutter, who will have the various shades of the skins directly before him. He will then be able to carry out his work in a methodical manner. The fours, after being matched, should be placed on the pattern, the largest and darkest skins to the bottom. This method of matching gives the cutter an opportunity of utilising all his skins without being left with oddments. This, of course, is sometimes unavoidable,

MUSQUASH OR MUSK-RAT.

but the possibility of this occurrence is mitigated to a great extent if the above is carried out.

Of the two distinct types of musquash it should be noted that the flatter type will not lend itself to elaborate work. The fewest cuts should therefore be made, as on many occasions there is not sufficient hair to cover the seams satisfactorily.

The flank is removed by inserting a board which is the shape of the skin. This allows the flank to be removed without cutting into the back of the skin. When selecting a point in the removing of the flank, changes of colour should be noted and care taken that no white nor light part is left on the back of the skin.

Let us take as an example the Southern type. After the removal of the flanks each skin is stretched and squared by the system of cuts as in diagram 89, the cut at the head being used only when absolutely necessary and when the skin is of the best quality. The extreme point at the rump must also be removed.

As pointed out, the largest skins are placed at the bottom of the garment and stretched in the width. The next largest are then placed in position, and so on until the top rows are reached. Here the skins will have to be stretched in the length. By so doing, we are able to obtain a continuous run of seam, each skin meeting at each end. The sides at the rump in diagram 89 are lowered and made of a proportionate width, every portion of the skin at the same time being utilised.

In the case of coats rows of skins must run absolutely straight in line, this applying in the case of the sleeve seams. The finest skins are selected for the most prominent parts of the coat, *i.e.*; collar, revers,

FURS AND FURRIERY

sleeves and cuffs. Of the best skins then remaining the, finest are placed down the middle of the back, whilst, lastly, the least faulty of the remainder are placed to the extreme front, the poorer material being worked towards the sides in the case of back and front. Diagram 92 shows the procedure of laying over seams ; the top row of skins are raised and brought to the

level of the underneath row. The cut is arched, but the effect when finished is straight.

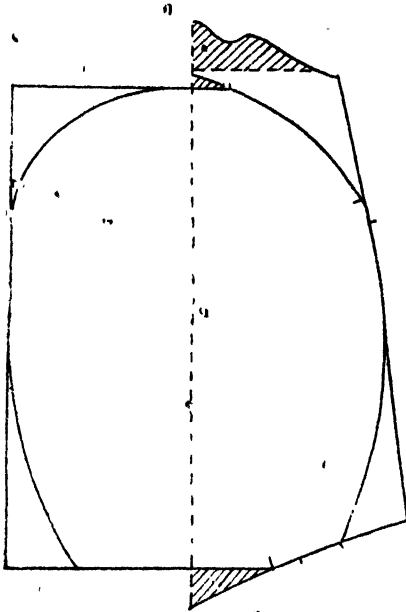


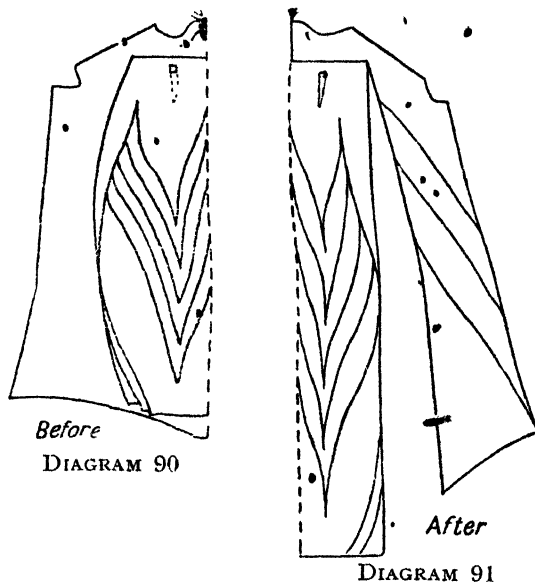
DIAGRAM 89

The higher piled natural musquash resembles closely the sable and mink, and if skilfully worked it can be improved upon so as to resemble this to even a greater degree. After carefully marking the centre of the skin and slightly damping, we examine same. The

shape of the skin will be found too wide at the middle for the desired object, and the stripe too pronounced to obtain our effect. In order to overcome these difficulties, a system of cuts is devised (see diagram 90), which enables us to lengthen the exceptional width, found principally in the middle of the skin. The stripe is likewise lengthened and the lower part of the skin squared. It will be seen that the cut

MUSQUASH OR MUSK-RAT.

nearest the side releases the skin, permitting all cuts to be lowered. This has the effect of bringing the long downward cut nearer the centre and making all parts of the skin of equal width. The side is lengthened and joined back as diagram 91. The diagrams show the effect before and after treatment.



Should a rounded effect be required, cuts as demonstrated in diagrams 90 and 91 should be used.

It should be noted that the cuts on the outside of the collar (the longer side) are dropped to a greater extent than elsewhere. Cuts should be taken shorter until the inside of the collar is reached (the shorter side). The effect when sewn will be rounded.

The method of making a natural musquash coat without any seams showing is a very elaborate one, and should only be practised on the very finest skins.

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In the first place the labour entailed in the making of such a coat is enormous, and secondly, the number of seams necessary in the made-up coat is so great that they are very likely to show if the pile is not sufficiently thick to hide them.

The process of working the skins will be one of losing the seams, as it is termed. The skins are measured very carefully in the length, due allowance being made for the fact that they must be lengthened, as a narrow skin is required. Two skins will be found sufficient to extend to the required length, and these should be matched with care.

A portion of one skin, which matches the rump of the skin which is to be worked with it, is found and joined.

The remainder is worked in accordance with the pile of the hair. We thus obtain a continuous flow of hair in the two skins.

Cut indicated in diagram 90 may be used, as well as method shown in diagram 92, for increasing the panels of the two skins to the required length.

Every form of irregularity should be introduced, and a number of cuts for the length sewn across the joining seams, in order to hide same more effectively.

Cuts may be made as often as is found necessary. The maximum length of each drop should not exceed $\frac{1}{2}$ in., the interval between successive cuts being not more than $\frac{1}{2}$ in.

The more cuts that are made the narrower will the skin become, so that more skins will be needed for the width. More stripes will be therefore obtained and the appearance of the finished garment will be greatly enhanced.

MUSQUASH OR MUSK-RAT.

- The finest parts should be reserved for the collar, cuffs and other prominent portions of the coat.

In matching the skins it should be seen that the grounds of the skins as well as the surfaces are similar, as one will fit into the other.

When the method illustrated in diagram 90 has been

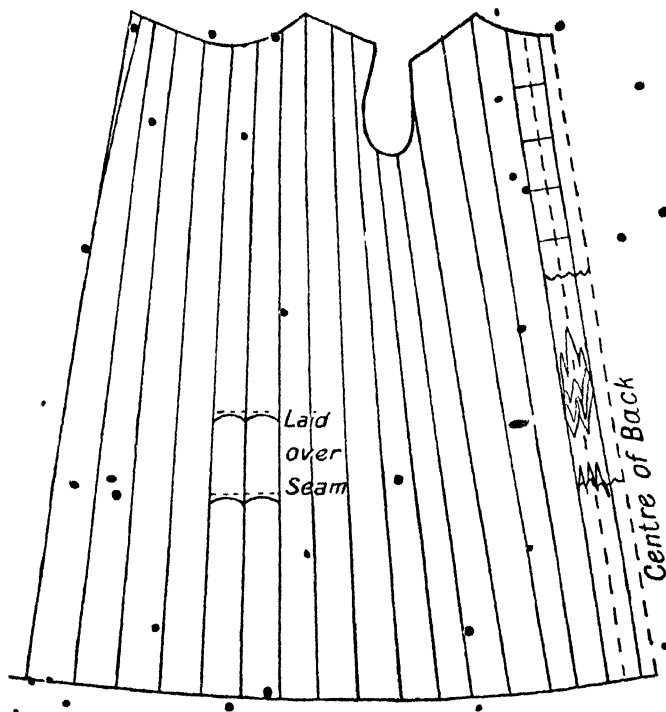


DIAGRAM 92

carried out, one panel of the coat is formed. This is repeated in each case until the whole of the body of the coat is complete, the same lines of working being adopted in the collar, cuffs, etc.

The skin should have the belly removed in a rounded fashion as in diagram 90, so that it is devoid of any

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flatter part. The effect before and after is shown. The centre seam should be carefully marked and the first downward stroke of the knife from the centre seam should be as near as possible to the centre.

The last long downward cut moves nearer to the centre as the remaining seams are lowered in length.

Seams should be kept quite straight, as the beauty of a natural musquash article or garment is the regularity of the seams.

If this method is not desired, a general system of cuts as shown in diagram 89 may be adopted. All particulars as already stated should be carried out.

Nailing.—The garment should be damped so that the hair does not become wet. Care should be taken that all seams are damped well, as dry seams are the first that are likely to give way. Where a whole skin runs down the centre of the back, it is essential that this should be kept perfectly in the middle, whilst the skins on either side run straight down. When the garment is worn, the cross seams give the effect of seams running straight across the coat. The sleeve seams should likewise continue to run on a level with the seams in the body of the coat and must receive the attention of the nailer. Stretching should be done with and not against the hair.

Should any shortage occur, owing to under-estimation, it should be adjusted before nailing. Avoid piecing after nailing.

Drying should be effected naturally and not by means of artificial heat. All seams should be well pressed and hammered. Further points on finishing are given on page 344.

CHAPTER XXVIII

SEAL MUSQUASH

Practical Working •

THE object of shearing and dyeing musquash is to make the fur resemble a sealskin as closely as possible. The fuller pile type of skin is used, as this gives better results in the shearing. About eight to twelve skins (according to size) are first carefully sewn together in what is termed a "Plate" and then sent to be sheared and dyed. When these processes have been carried out, the skin resembles as closely as possible that of a seal, in colour, size and texture.

In addition to the form of plate above mentioned, we have the seal musquash skin. This skin is treated in exactly the same way as a plate, but the process is applied separately in the case of each skin. The skins are opened, flattened, perfected, seal-dyed and sheared, and lastly, bundled in twenties in which way they are offered on the market.

• In forming the plate the fewest cuts should be used in the working, and the skins should be sewn together with the finest seams. The width of the plate must not exceed that of the shearing machine, which is to do the work.

• France is noted for this particular work, especially the firm of C. and E. Chapal Frères & Co. •

Diagram 93 illustrates a method of placing together a plate of eight skins. In order to obtain perfect results the skins must in the first place be of a good texture, that is, possess a thick undergrowth of hair.

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Any damages which appear must be removed in an irregular form and sewn with fine seams; and, lastly, the flat portions at the extremities of the sides must be entirely cut away, principles of diagram 95 being carried out on each skin. It will be seen that the Vandyke seam stretches right across the skin, as in diagram 93, which is considered by many an objection. One can, however, carry out the general principles of making a plate by using method as diagram 96, in which case the flat sides are sewn straight and laid over.

Diagram 94 gives a further method of forming a plate of nine skins. It will be seen that the natural shape of the skins is taken advantage of, and no seams are needed for the purpose of squaring, and lastly, an irregular joining Vandyke seam is used. The method illustrated in diagram 94, after the clean side is removed, is far preferable. Should plates be used in the making of coats, great care must be taken with the seams. Often poor parts are left in, in order to increase the size. They should all be removed, and as many seams opened as is deemed essential.

In order to cover all points in the working of seal musquash, we will commence by taking forty-six skins for the purpose of making a coat. These are carefully matched in pile and colour, as they very often shade differently. Each skin should be damped slightly and the greatest possible amount of stretch obtained. The skin is found to be narrower at the head than at the rump, where it ends at an extreme point. Furthermore, there are two flat portions at each corner, top and bottom, which are indicated in diagram 95. A system of cuts must therefore be used to fill the gap

SEAL MUSQUASH

which is left after these four objectionable pieces have been removed.

A method of procedure is given in diagram 95.

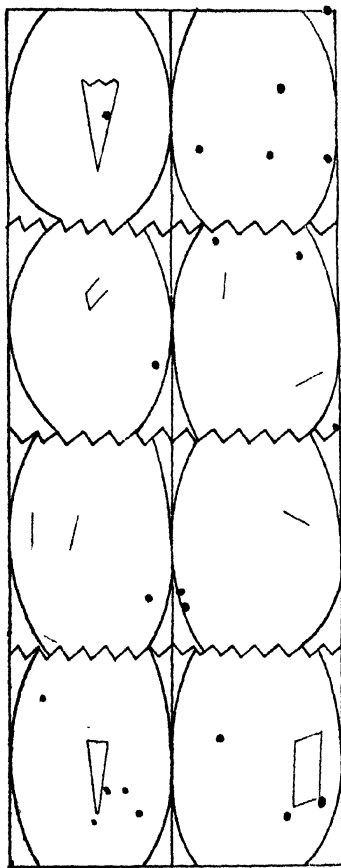


DIAGRAM 93

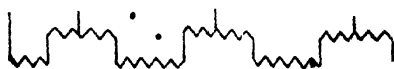


DIAGRAM 94

Many cutters use method illustrated in diagram 95 with two distinct "V" shape cuts. The object is to obtain more fullness in the skin, preventing tightness at sides.

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It will be seen that after removing the waste portions and using the cut indicated in diagram 95, the skin is squared with the fewest cuts possible (method as diagram 96 can be used if preferred in making a coat).

The extreme point at the rump, and the head of the musquash are both removed, and the skin is sewn together by means of a Vandyke seam. The Vandyke should be very small for seal musquash. A piece of cardboard of a Vandyke shape will help the cutter.

In working this garment great care should be exercised to avoid unnecessary seams. The skins forming the middle of the back of the coat should be exactly underneath one another, all other skins being worked on the same principle. The best skins are placed down the middle of the back, and, in order to obtain regularity, sizes should be an important feature. Collars, cuffs, revers and sleeves should all be of good quality.

Diagram 96 gives a further method of joining seal musquash skins. It will be noticed that the Vandyke seam does not extend right across the skin.

Cuts indicated in diagram 95 are not used, instead, the skin is cut a little higher in the pelk towards the head, and by the application of a laying-over seam one obtains a good joining seam.

This method is recommended when the garment is required specially clean. It does away with any seams and undoubtedly proves most successful and should be employed whenever an opportunity arises.

The cuts beyond the Vandyke seam indicated in diagram 96 should be slightly slanting instead of straight. This precaution will prevent any tears

SEAL MUSQUASH

occurring. Both methods, as indicated in diagrams 95 and 96, are applicable in the case of coats, each being used as necessity arises.

An application of boiled linseed applied with a brush in the reverse direction to the flow of the hair will endow the article with a better lustre. (Formula No. 7, page 354.)

The hair of a seal musquash coat should flow in an upward direction. The application of linseed will

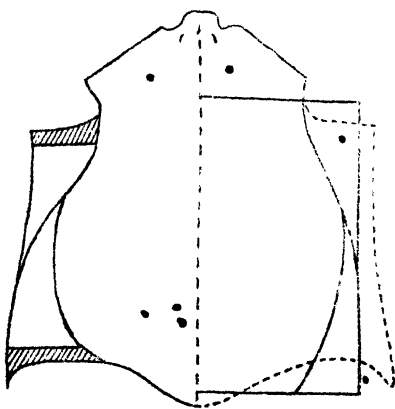


DIAGRAM 95

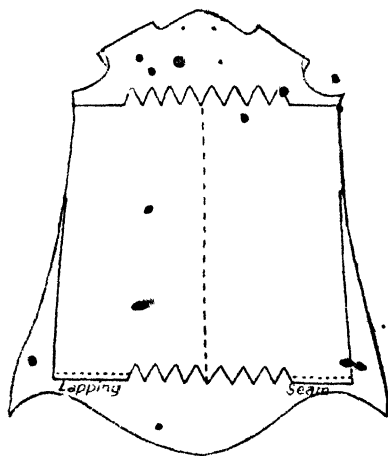


DIAGRAM 96

also tend to free the hair to a certain extent, and so give the coat a better appearance. An application of hot sand frees and cleanses the hair.

Nailing.—One of the principal features in the nailing of seal musquash skins is the cleanliness which must be observed throughout. The skins in the preparation of dyeing have acquired a lustre which is very quickly lost if care is not taken.

The coat should be carefully examined by the nailer,

FURS AND FURRIERY

and any weak or open seam rectified before nailing is commenced. On this being done, the coat is laid across the board and the length decided, stretching being applied to the parts which mostly need it. The reason why the garment is fastened top and bottom is that by this means less pressure is put on any one part of the article. The whole skin which runs down the centre of the back should be made the dividing line of the garment, pressure being on either side, so that when the garment is completed, the centre of each skin is in correct alignment, forming a continuous run from top to bottom. Although irregularity in all seams has been avoided by the cutter, it is still necessary for the nailer to keep his cross seams straight, as any deviation would tend to give bad results. The nailer must not expect to get very much stretch from seal musquash, as all the natural grease has been removed in the dyeing process. Furthermore, should an article in seal musquash have to be re-nailed it would not make for improvement, as the skin becomes brittle. No artificial methods of drying should be applied and should any seams be thicker than is desired, these should be hammered in order to flatten. The article when dry should be cleaned with an application of hot sand, which is followed by the reverse setting of the hair. It should then be thoroughly beaten and other known methods of cleansing applied, so that when the cutter receives the garment from the nailer, it is thoroughly clean.

The ordinary methods of straightening off must be applied and special taping methods, which, by the way, workmen are growing very lax in using, should be adopted. Flat tape should be stitched down on

MUSQUASH FLANKS

either side of the closing seams, neck and armholes, also at any other parts of the garment which are apt to become stretched in the working. It should be recognised that taping has a twofold advantage. In the first place the side seams, if taped, are not liable to become stretched; secondly, the particular parts described above are preserved if taping is effected, as these portions undergo specially hard wear. The coat should finally be backed with linen to secure the leather and so prevent tearing.

MUSQUASH FLANKS

Practical Working

The musquash flank, which is the belly of the musquash removed, if worked skilfully can be made up into a very satisfactory garment. Flanks are used for two purposes. In the making of "plates," which undergo the same treatment as a seal musquash and appear, when subjected to electrolytic treatment and shorn, very fine in quality, resembling the sealskin. They are also used in the natural state for the manufacture of muffs, ties and coats.

With regard to seal musquash flank "plates," the method which should be adopted in the working is similar to that of seal musquash linings. *Vide* SEAL : MUSQUASH.

In placing together natural musquash flanks the matching is of very great importance. A method should be followed in the matching similar to the one given.

Flanks should be paired for size, quality and colour;

FURS AND FURRIERY

thus if 500 flanks were under consideration, these should be divided into 250 pairs. Each pair then being matched with another should give the cutter 125 quartettes to control. The largest flanks should occupy the bottom of the garment and the smaller ones the top. The prominent parts of the coat should consist of the better flanks, and those of inferior quality should form the less prominent parts.

A diagram is given (No. 97) of a natural musquash flank, where it will be noticed that the head and rump are removed, and that either side of the centre is stretched to the dotted line. In working flanks from dark musquash, an even amount of dark sides should be left on each side of the flank.

Care should be taken that sufficient of the head is removed so that the join between the rump and head is satisfactory.

Seams should be sewn very finely and kept perfectly straight throughout the work. Details should be looked to and seams sewn well; should, however, a rump be flatter than the head on which it is to be sewn, the difficulty will be overcome by using a laying-over seam. Seams crossing along sleeve should be level with cross seams of the body of the coat.

In general, straightness and uniformity of each row should be studied, and can be obtained if size of flanks are taken into consideration in placing out the coat.

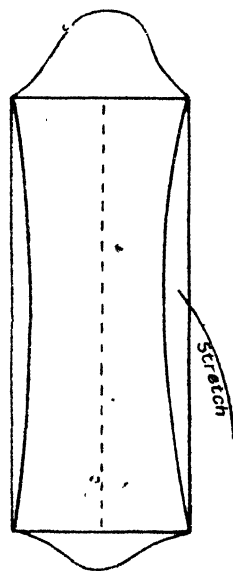


DIAGRAM 97

CHAPTER XXIX

• FOXES

French : *Renard*. German : *Fuchs* •

• *Natural History*

THE skin of the fox has been a very great favourite for many years. Its durability and luxurious appearance will no doubt cause the vogue to continue for many seasons to come.

The types of foxes used by the furrier vary from the exquisite silver fox to the common land fox. The animals are found in practically all countries, the finest full-haired foxes coming from the cold regions where they are provided by nature with a particularly full-furred coat as a protection from the intense cold. Those obtained from the warmer climates are poorer in quality and therefore less in value. • ; •

It is one of the most cunning of animals, depending almost entirely on its own wits to procure the necessary food. It is most persistent in stalking its prey, and a chicken marked down by the fox seldom escapes its fate. When hotly pursued, the animal will endeavour if possible to cross a stream in order that its traces should be covered.

• Below we touch upon the various kinds of foxes used in the trade. These are placed out in the order of their value.. •

• *The Silver Fox.*—In appearance, beautifully dark, with a sprinkling of silver hairs, enhancing the fine effect. The tail invariably is dark with a distinct

FURS AND FURRIERY

white tip, whilst the belly of the skin is black. Silver foxes vary in price from £30 to £250, according to quality, colour, size and also the position of the sprinkle of silver hairs, which depends upon the whim of fashion. A silver fox, to be perfect to-day, should possess a dark head, and a sprinkling of white hairs from midway down the skin to the rump. The tail should be bushy, clear, and end with the white point. Some time ago a skin free from all silver hairs was demanded by fashion.

The animal is obtained principally from Canada, Alaska, Greenland and California.

The Natural Black Fox.—This skin is extremely soft and silky to the touch, and dense black in colour. The tip of the tail is white. It is very rare, and ranks almost as high in value as the silver fox.

It is chiefly found in the Hudson Bay district, Siberia and Alaska.

The Blue Fox.—In colour a smoky blue, paler at times, with a distinct undergrowth of blue. In size it resembles a white fox. It is found in Yukon, Alaska, as well as in Iceland and Greenland. The animal is very rare and precious.

The Cross Fox.—This fur ranks next in value. In appearance it is a light grey with a sandy mixture, conspicuously marked on the shoulder. The belly, legs and ears are black, and the top of the tail white. It inhabits Alaska and Canada. The types of this particular fox vary considerably, the finest being almost as beautiful as a silver fox, the poorest resembling very closely the common red fox.

The White Fox.—In colour pure white, to a yellowish tint, depending upon the seasons in which the animal

FOXES

is caught. In the off season the coat is of a brown or bluish tint, the top white hairs having disappeared. It is one of the smallest types of fox obtainable. The underground of the skin is grey in colour and the pile very close. Plentiful supplies of white foxes are obtainable, reaching us from Siberia, China and the Hudson Bay districts. It is one of the most popular varieties. The yellow skin is usually dyed black. The pelt is very thin, becoming tender in the process of dyeing.

The Red Fox.—Beautiful in colour, grading from a bright reddish shade to a dark red. The animal is abundant in North America. It is used in the natural state and is also dyed to various other shades. The tail is very bushy with a white tip. The red fox varies in colour more than any other type, the shade depending upon the part of the world the animal is obtained from.

The Kit Fox.—A small variety of fox, measuring some $2\frac{1}{2}$ ft. long, grey in colour with a mixture of long white hairs. The animal is found in parts of Canada and America. It has a distinguishable dark mark down the spine, running paler towards the sides.

The Grey Fox.—Dark grey in colour, with a sprinkling of white hairs. The animal is found in parts of the Pacific coast, New Jersey and North Carolina. It is extremely small, measuring about 18 in. in length, and often very poor in quality. This animal is also termed the Virginia fox.

The Yellow Fox.—Yellow in colour. The animal is obtained from Africa. It is very poor in quality and seldom used in the trade.

The Common Fox.—Found in the British Isles as

FURS AND FURRIERY

well as every other part of Europe. It is also obtainable in Australia. In quality it is poor, and often of little value to the furrier, for, as is well known, the animal is hunted for sport in England, the tail or brush being given to the first lady in the field and the body thrown to the dogs.

Practical Working

The fox is a skin with a thick pile, and can therefore be worked elaborately with little fear of any seams showing as long as the differences of the hair which occur at various parts of the skin are taken into consideration. The types of fox described in the natural history of this skin are great in number and may be divided into many classes according to their value.

In each case it will be found that the fox is a rather valuable skin, comparatively speaking, and will therefore warrant careful attention.

Three methods of working this skin are adopted. The best grade of fox, which is worked without being taped, the same quality in which the process of taping is employed, and, lastly, the poorer kind of fox, the pile of which is too flat for elaborate work. Of the type of foxes that permit of taping, the white (natural or dyed), the natural blue, and, lastly, the red fox (dyed only) give good results. The skin should be opened along the belly, slightly dampened and stretched, thus enabling the cutter to know how much material is at his disposal.

On scrutinising the skin we find the following outstanding features in the pile. It is distinctly flat at the extreme head, becoming full and silky before

FOXES

reaching the level of the front paws where it is very flat. The hair then flows regularly, increasing in depth of pile until the rump is reached, dipping at the extreme rump. Down the middle of the back runs the flattest part of the pile, rising on either side of the stripe and then decreasing gradually until the sides are reached. The defects of the skin are found in the extreme sides, which are too poor for use, as well as above the hind paws and below the front paws.

As much of the objectionable side as is necessary must be removed, the defect at the region of the front paws being treated as shown in diagram 98, marked X. With regard to the part above the hind paws, treatment will depend greatly upon the size of the bald patch in this quarter. Should there be a number of loose hairs, seams sewn, as in diagram 98 show how this defect can be remedied. The object of sewing across the skin in the manner indicated is, for the purpose of binding a greater number of hairs over the square inch, making the appearance of this particular portion as near as possible like the remainder of the skin. If the particular skin does not warrant seams being sewn,

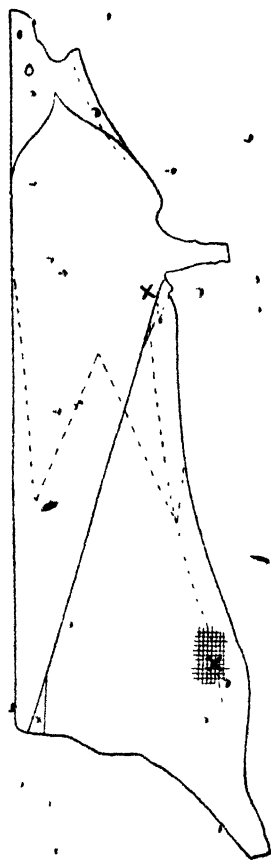


DIAGRAM 98

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diagram 99 shows the cut which can be used. It will be noticed that material is drawn from a good part of the skin.

The skin should be marked down the centre as well as the sides. In moving the skin for length or width the head, the level of the front paws and the lower part should not be cut beyond the limits of each individual portion of the skin. The cut for the length is illustrated in diagram 98, which has the following advantages: In the first place the required length is obtained. Secondly, the bareness under the

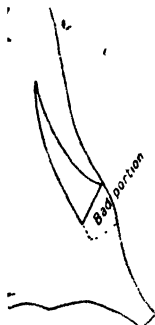


DIAGRAM 99

front paw is eliminated, and, lastly, the objectionable piece under the tail removed by this same cut. The cut familiar to most workers is the subject also of diagram 98 in dotted line. (The cut may be reversed.) The cut in diagram 98 is preferable, as it narrows the rump of the skin. No. 98 diagram, furthermore, gives the way in which the head is widened when the head of a fox is required in position in the finished state.

Heads, tails and paws are not removed if same are required in the finished article.

No. 100 diagram shows a method of making a one-skin fox muff with no distinctive seam showing. No. 1 strip matches the head of the skin, the position of this strip being carefully selected, each alternate strip being placed above and below the portion marked A. No. 25 strip will then match No. 26. The position of each stripe is noted in diagram 101. Guiding lines are drawn as illustration in order to ensure the correct re-joining of the strips. By working the muff in

FOXES

in this manner, no pronounced seams are shown, as would occur in the joining of head and rump.

Diagram 102 gives a method of making four skins

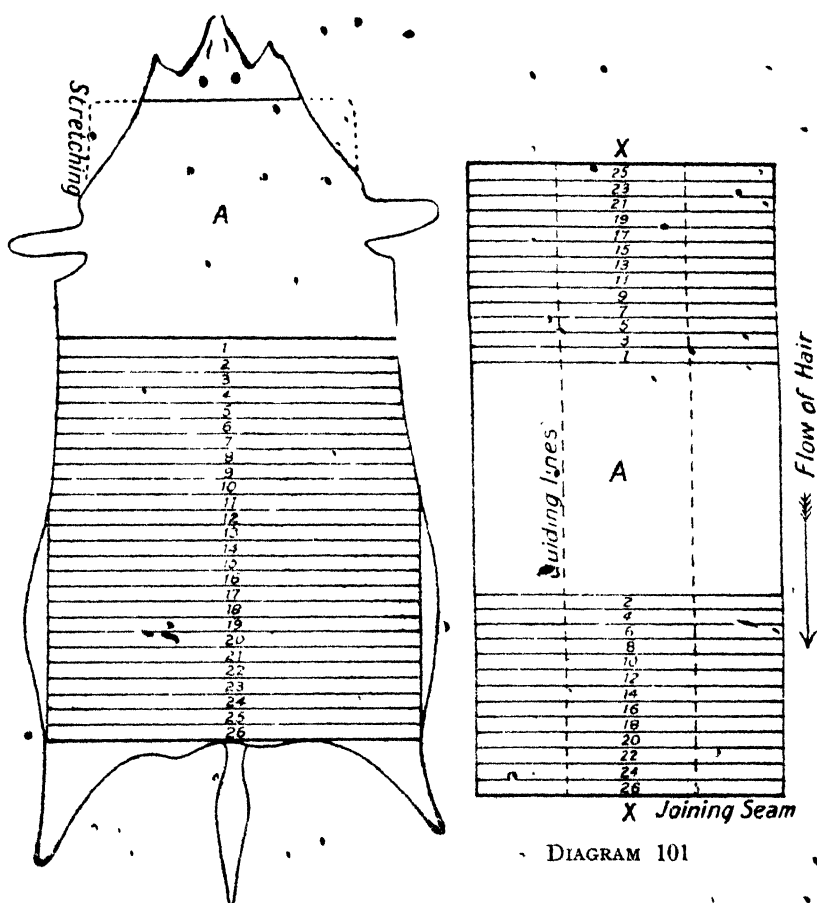


DIAGRAM 100

out of three. Each of the four skins will possess a centre and sides, and they will all be alike. For this purpose we letter our skins A, B and C. Skins A and B are split forming four halves. Skin C is split

FURS AND FURRIERY

into strips numbering 1 to 13 and A to M on each side of the centre. No. 1 strip nearest the centre is

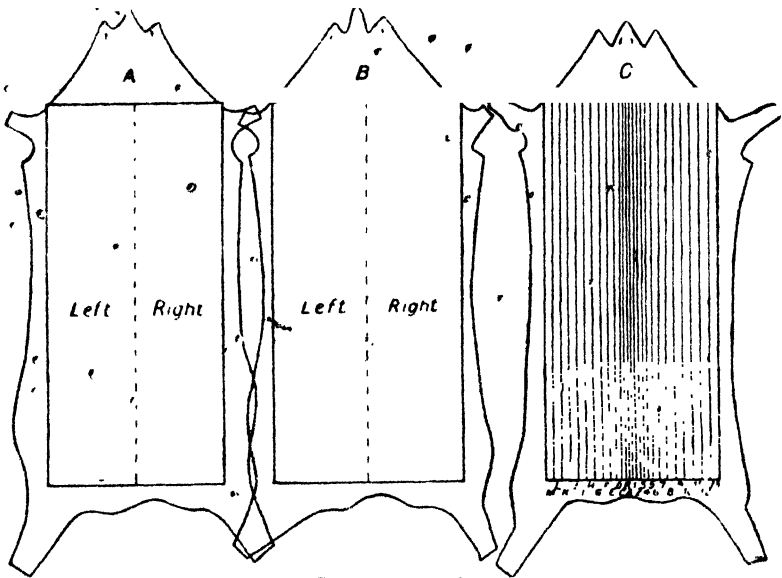


DIAGRAM 102

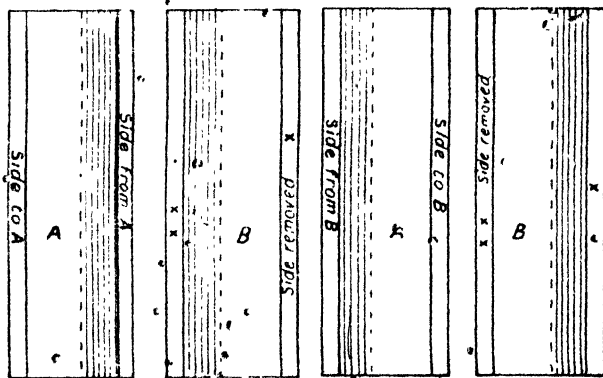


DIAGRAM 103

attached to skin A, right side. Strip 2 is sewn to B skin, right side, and strip 3 to A skin, right side.

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Strip 4 is attached to B skin, right side. (Letters take same effect on left side of skins.)

The diagram shows how this procedure is continued in using up the remainder of the strips, which, when completed, make four skins composed in the following fashion. First skin : Left half of A skin + strips 1, 3, 5, 7, 9 and 11. Left, half of B skin + strips 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12. Right, half of A skin + A, C, E, G, I, K, and Right half of B skin + B, D, F, H, J, L.

The sides are removed from skins A, B, C and the new skin D in the manner depicted in diagram 103. Half-skins which originally were A and B skins, will be further equalised. Diagram 103 gives the finished effect.

Diagrams 104 and 105 show how skins can be rounded, the latter method being adopted when more roundness is needed.

It will be noticed in diagram 105 that the skin is moved by a gradual process extending to the outside of the collar. The drop becomes longer at intervals, commencing with $\frac{1}{4}$ in. and extending to 1 in. The cut, as well as the result, is described in diagram 106, depicting half the skin. The cut may be reversed, the first downward cut being made in the direction of the head. In diagram 104, an incision is made, the cut being pulled round. This facilitates the stretching.

Diagram 107, gives a method of rounding the head in order to make a two-skin tie, which is an article very

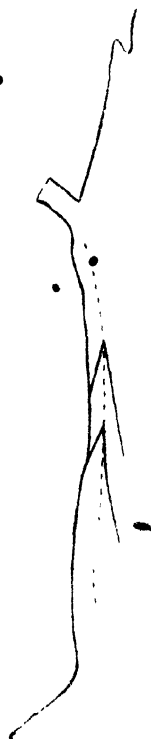


DIAGRAM 104

FURS AND FURRIERY

much in favour (parts eased are depicted). It is often necessary to round the heads only, the remainder of

the tie remaining quite straight. The procedure followed is clearly illustrated in this diagram. The skins are then joined at the neck by means of a connecting tape.

One should always endeavour to work fox skins side by side whenever possible in preference to one on top of the other.

The correct method in the making of a four-skin tie would be to drop the two skins in the length to the utmost extent for the one side of the tie and join the skins side by side. In this case the two stripes would show and so give a better appearance to the article generally. Some cutters would proceed to join two of the four skins together, forming one side of the tie, either by losing the seam or by showing the join; this

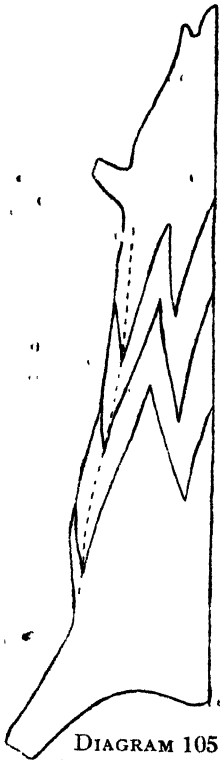


DIAGRAM 105

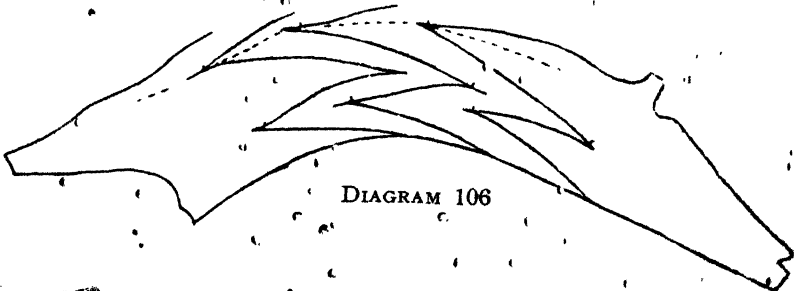


DIAGRAM 106

method would entail dropping in the width and stretching, giving bad results.

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This demonstration is specially emphasised for the purpose of expressing the general methods, which would be too lengthy to discuss here, but if the principle is borne in mind it may be applied whenever the opportunity arises. There is always, it must be understood, the method of joining head to head and rump to rump, if length is required, with the best results.

The worker should avail himself of this opportunity particularly this year (1920) when the prevailing fashion calls for large articles—as many as eight or ten fox skins going to make one cape.

A method of making an animal tie of $1\frac{1}{2}$ skins, when one skin will not extend to the required length, is often practised. The rump of another skin is applied in the one case and the head in the other, thus forming two animal ties from three skins.

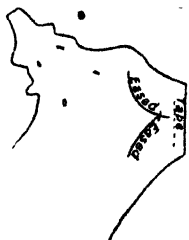


DIAGRAM 107

The cross seam should be var-dyked to ensure invisibility in the finished article. Any cuts which are to be used should be made after the half skin has been joined, in the hope that the seam may be further disarranged. In the working of cross and silver foxes, care should be taken that as few seams as possible should be used, in order that the beautiful marking of the skins should not be disarranged. This would apply in all foxes which are possessed of natural marking. Diagram 108 shows the cut which is made at the head of a silver fox skin, the position of which should be selected at a part where the growth is thickest. Diagram 109 gives the method which should be adopted at the rump of the skin.

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The class of foxes which are taped, are those possessing a thick undergrowth of hair, sufficiently dense to cover any tape inserted in the leather, viz., white fox, white dyed, thick natural blue with a uniform colour, and red foxes dyed black. Some skins have an undergrowth extending from head to rump, whilst in others the undergrowth ends half-way up the skin. In the latter case only the part with the growth should be taped. The skins should be nailed first in order

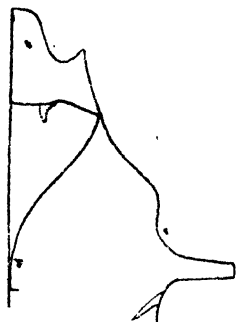


DIAGRAM 108

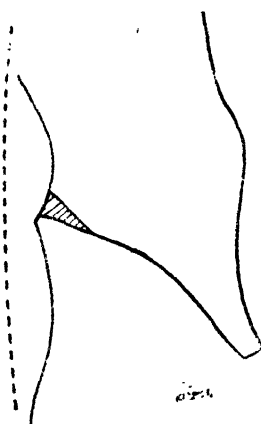


DIAGRAM 109

to obtain a more solid background. Guiding lines should be drawn across the skin, the object being that after the tape is inserted, one should be able to observe better if the skin is resewn in position or not. The leather should be cut, but the undergrowth only pulled apart to the width of the tape inserted. The clots of hair will prevent the tape from being seen from the surface. The colour of the tape should as near as possible match the underground of the skin, for the reason that any difference in colour might be noticeable. In order to decide what width of

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tape is to be used, slit the skin some 2 in. and test the width by inserting tape. The tape should not be more than twice the width of the leather.

In taping foxes for width, do not tape the centre or sides as these are too flat. Diagram 110 illustrates the method. It will be noticed in diagram that the cut passes across the shoulder of the skin. Care must be taken before doing this that the clots referred to elsewhere are sufficiently dense to receive the tape.

In taping foxes for length the Chevron method is specially recommended. The extreme edges should be taped. This will give added width. Diagram 111 illustrates the Chevron method, which is as effective if Chevron is reversed, for the cut is made with and not against the hair. Both methods, however, are practised. Sides are independently lowered in the length after being detached. A further method of taping a fox for length, where the level of the front paws is flat, is the following: Method as diagram 111 above the front paws, no tapes on a level with same, and, lastly, reverse Chevron below the level of the front paws.

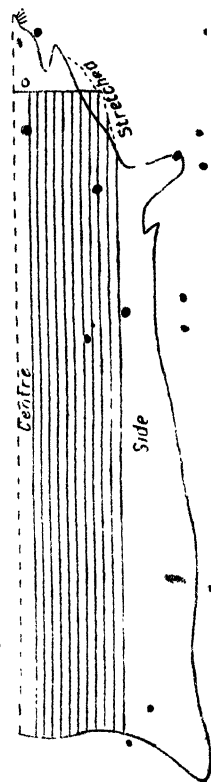


DIAGRAM 110

Easing, which is usual in fur machines, should take place in the tape and not in the leather. Lastly, it will be found very useful to back a fox which has been taped, in order to give it a greater substance.

FURS' AND FURRIERY

In treating with the cheaper types of foxes, one should follow the instructions laid down in the working of the better skins in the principle only. Elaborate

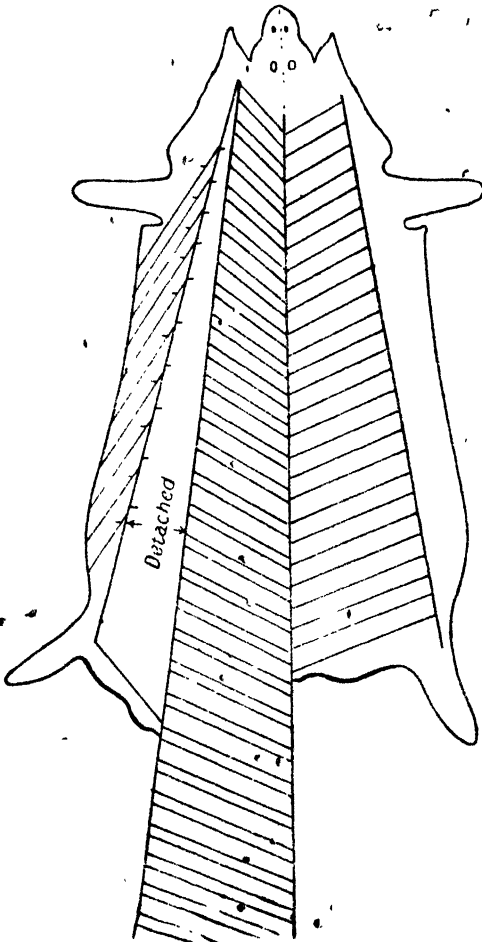


DIAGRAM 111

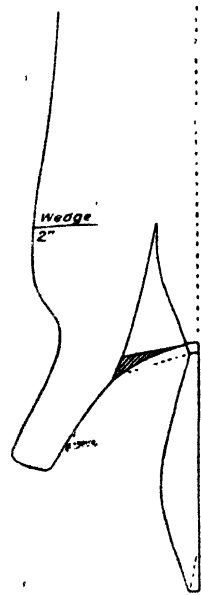


DIAGRAM 112

cuts should be avoided, as the skin is flatter in pile and therefore seams are liable to show on the hair side.

FOXES

It will be useful to know that a fox tail, rather large in size, can, on being stretched and damped, be split through. This operation would make two tails, which can afterwards be drawn.

Nailing.—In the nailing of foxes the skins will need to be damped well and stretched with the hair and not against. The nailer should take care not to stretch below the front paws, above the hind paws, or the sides. A piece of damp wool should be placed into the head of the fox, so as to prevent same from becoming too dry. The centre of the skin should be perfectly straight. The difficulty, due to the excessive width at the rump of the skin, is mitigated by using the method as illustrated in diagram 112, but remains a difficulty nevertheless. To overcome this, the extreme rump should be pulled towards the tail, easing at the same time. Diagram 112 further indicates how to narrow the rump of the skin. The tongue is lowered to the point indicated by dotted line. A straight line, shown on diagram, gives the position where a wedge, some 2 in. in width, may be inserted. The object is to cause fullness when dry which will throw the paws forward.

The paws of the skin should be straightened and placed in position. Artificial drying should not be resorted to. The fox improves by being beaten, but one should avoid using the comb.

CHAPTER XXX

CHINCHILLA

French : *Chinchille* German : *Chinchilla*

Natural History

THE chinchilla is well known throughout Europe, and ranks amongst the most costly pelts, possessing a beautiful coat, soft and high piled. In colour it is a mixed shade of grey possessing every shade of that colour in each individual skin, forming a fine example of exquisite blending. The colour is often light, whilst skins with a bluish tint are also seen.

It inhabits Peru and the mountainous districts of the African regions. The greatest quantities come from Chili and Bolivia. It is a member of the rodent family, and feeds on vegetable matter. It measures some 9 in., the tail being 5 or 6 in. in length. It has long whiskers, measuring 2 or 3 in., and rather large ears. The belly of the skin is lighter in colour.

It was all but exterminated some few years ago, and were it not for the action of the Government of Chili prohibiting the trapping of this precious animal, this would have undoubtedly happened.

Some years ago a quarter of a million were offered for sale, these are now reduced to a negligible amount owing to the Chilean Government prohibiting further trapping until 1922, when the skins may be trapped during May and August. Meanwhile breeding is encouraged to a great extent.

The bastard chinchilla, which is far more numerous, is shorter in length than the chinchilla proper. The

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hair is not so high in the pile, the colour being that of a chinchilla. It inhabits La Plata.

Pepper is greatly used as a moth preventive, especially when shipping these pelts.

The price paid for a good chinchilla skin is £10, and it is appreciated in all countries as one of the rarest and finest of skins.

The description of the various qualities are the following—

Dark.—In one class, the best, dark and of good quality.

Dark Pt. Pale.—Part of dark and part of pale.

Pale.—In quality the best, but pale in shade.

Faulty.—Skins possessing defects which prevent them being included in any of the above classes.

Medium.—Skins medium in size.

Small.—Skins small in size.

Practical Working

In the working of chinchilla, fine seams are absolutely essential for the two following reasons: The skin is a small one; any seams sewn make the already small skin smaller and, furthermore, the pelt is thin and liable to break unless the seams are extremely fine. It very often occurs that numerous damages are found, the largest of which should be removed by the simplest cuts. The smaller damages, perhaps $\frac{1}{8}$ to $\frac{1}{4}$ in. in diameter, are not removed. Skins that are covered with a series of small damages are worked in that state after the larger damages have been removed. The tears of the skin are removed by cross cuts as described in diagram 113; which, when sewn finely, will not show. It will be noticed that the cut

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is horizontal, the reason being that the high pile is likely to hide the seam more effectively. The extreme rump, of the chinchilla is not used, nor is the head. Diagram 113 describes the method of adjusting the front paws economically, and by so doing every available piece is utilised. It will be seen in diagram that

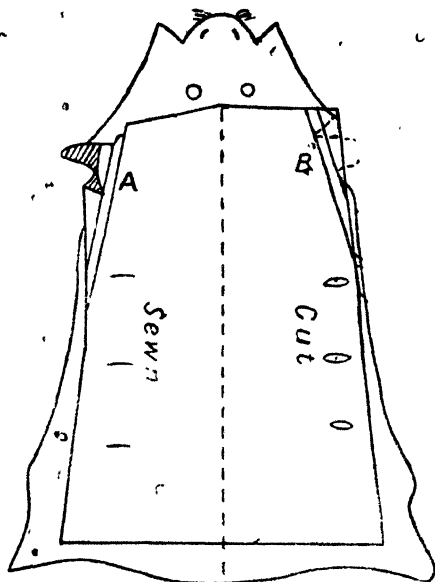


DIAGRAM 113

at position marked A cuts are made which extend to the level of the skin, B position shows the cut complete. The skin should be marked down the centre and side and worked perfectly straight. Should the extreme length of the skin be needed, this can be procured by a series of cuts shown in diagram 114. The cuts are formed for the purpose of removing the ears of the skin. The hair is very full at the head which enables one to use this portion with good results.

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Chinchilla skins should be carefully matched, as there is a great variety in colours as well as differences in pile.

There is plenty of hair, permitting elaborate cuts, which should be resorted to only when necessary. Cuts as shown in diagram 115 for widening the head are often used, this cut is used by many workers when the skin is in good quality.

These cuts should only be used when there is no other



DIAGRAM 114

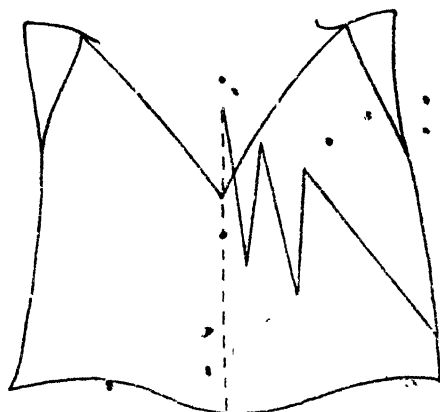


DIAGRAM 115

alternative, as it does not improve a skin. It should only be used by the furrier who possesses confidence in his skill. The effect is a wider and shorter skin. The sides, it will be noticed, are lowered independently.

Diagram 115 furthermore gives a method used for lengthening the chinchilla. Again, this cut is only employed in exceptional cases when the quality permits and no other alternative is available for obtaining the required length.

Cuts shown on diagram 115 for length should on no account be used when the widening of a head is being

FURS AND FURRIERY

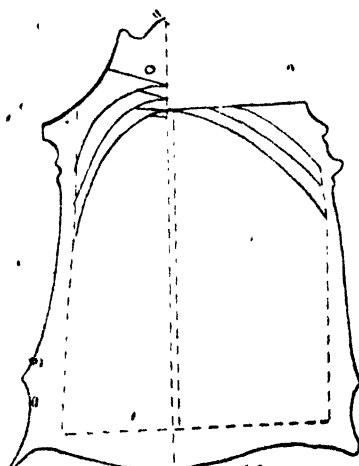
done on the same skin, for both cuts will undoubtedly give too complicated an effect in one skin. The cut in the length should be long and tapering to avoid a puckering effect in the work, and points should be on different levels. The sides are dropped independently.

As previously stated, the two cuts above described should be used with extreme caution. The reason diagram 115 is not recommended is because the hair



For length

DIAGRAM 116



Before

After

DIAGRAM 117



For width

DIAGRAM 118

of the chinchilla runs in a rounded fashion, cuts therefore made across the skin should be avoided. Diagram 116 gives a further method for obtaining lengths. Cuts are repeated as often as is found necessary. Diagram 117 gives a method for widening the head, the effect is shown both before and after working. Outside shaded section in diagram must be forfeited. Diagram 118 is a method for width, and if successfully carried out gives good results.

The skins are often split for the purpose of obtaining

CHINCHILLA

more accurate results in matching, and, furthermore, for the combination of smaller and larger skins. Half of the larger or flatter skins are placed with half of the smaller or fuller skins, as the case may be. Many workers do not, however, approve of the splitting of chinchilla skins. Diagram 119 illustrates a method which should be used in the making of a chinchilla muff composed of a number of skins.

The principles studied in the making of this muff

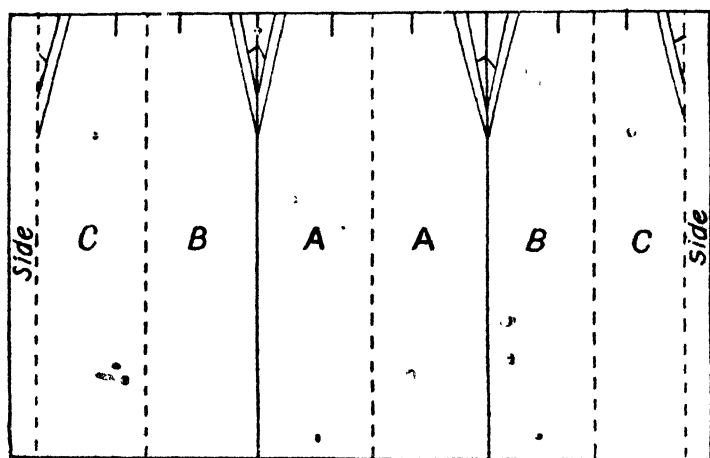


DIAGRAM 119

are applicable to all chinchilla articles. The outstanding feature is exactness in work and matching. A skin, after having been squared by means of cuts indicated in diagram 113 as well as adjusted by cuts as indicated by diagram 114, is placed in the middle. B and C skins are split and joined on either side as diagram 119. An additional piece of side can be placed to the extreme edge for turning.

Nailing.—The nailing should be very careful

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done, pins not nails being used for this purpose. Do not stretch the skin with vigour, for any strain at once appears at the seams. The article should be allowed to dry naturally, otherwise it is liable to become brittle. In the finishing, the most important factor to be considered is softness and pliability. It should be set and carefully beaten, and cleanliness studied throughout.

. Nevertheless a certain amount of dullness is unavoidable after the various processes have been applied; an application of violet powder will give lustre to the skin (formula No. 5, page 354).

CHAPTER XXXI

PERSIAN LAMB

French : *Persianne* German : *Persianer*

Natural History

THE Persian lamb is some 18 in. in length and varies in colour. It may be black, a brown, white or mottled. The skins are all dyed black; even the natural black skins are transformed to the perfect black required by the furrier. The dye is taken excellently, the waters of Germany being particularly suitable.

The animal belongs to the sheep family, and is known to be one of the most ancient species. The hair has a beautiful curl; the more perfect the curl, the more valuable the skin.

When quite young, a jacket is placed over the animal, preventing the coat from being bruised, and also by close pressure helping to beautify the curl.

Tight-curved as well as loose-curved skins are obtainable, and are classified according to their values.

It is from the Persian lamb that the broadtail is obtained, being the unborn lamb of that animal.

The Persian comes from parts of Asia. These skins are offered for sale principally at the Russian fairs, which are held at different parts of the year at Nijni-Novgorod, etc. (See FAIRS, page 10.).

Practical Working

Like most pelts in the trade, Persians are liable to be damaged. Before commencing to write, therefore,

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upon the actual working, it would, perhaps, be advisable to deal with the methods applied for repairing the damaged parts. In the first place, the simplest cuts possible should be used, and, as will be clearly seen in diagram 120, when the damage is of a small size it may be easily removed by one cut, marked E. Damage marked F is of a larger size, and since this particular skin lends itself to piecing to a certain extent, a piece can often be found to fit into the gap so keeping the skin as near as possible complete. It would be advisable to insert the piece into the hole in an irregular manner. The ears of the skin should also be removed by a downward stroke, as marked G in diagram. It will be further noticed on diagram that objectionable parts marked AB, CD, which are not good in quality, are remedied by a method indicated, which is one of interchanging.

A method of squaring the skin is often required when making a garment of Persian. Diagram 120 shows, furthermore, that portions of the skin above the front paws are narrow. In order to widen these parts, pieces marked 1 and 2 should be removed and inserted into the shortages above the front paws, so squaring the skin but making it shorter in length. An objectionable part is removed, indicated by shaded lines in diagram. The unwanted portions under the front paws can be remedied by inserting parts of the front paws, the positions of which should be interchanged as shown. The undesirable parts appearing above the hind paws can be improved in a like manner by inserting parts of the hind paws, again interchanging. The dotted lines on diagram show the complete square of good material, all parts outside being removed.

PERSIAN LAMB

Drops and elaborate work are not recommended in this skin, the reason being that a piece may easily be matched for shortages, and the necessary size so obtained without interfering with the curl.

It is perhaps as well to mention a cut which may

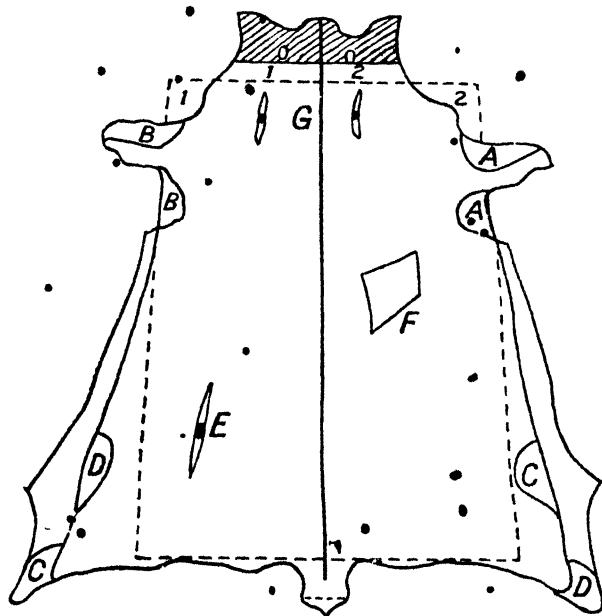


DIAGRAM 120

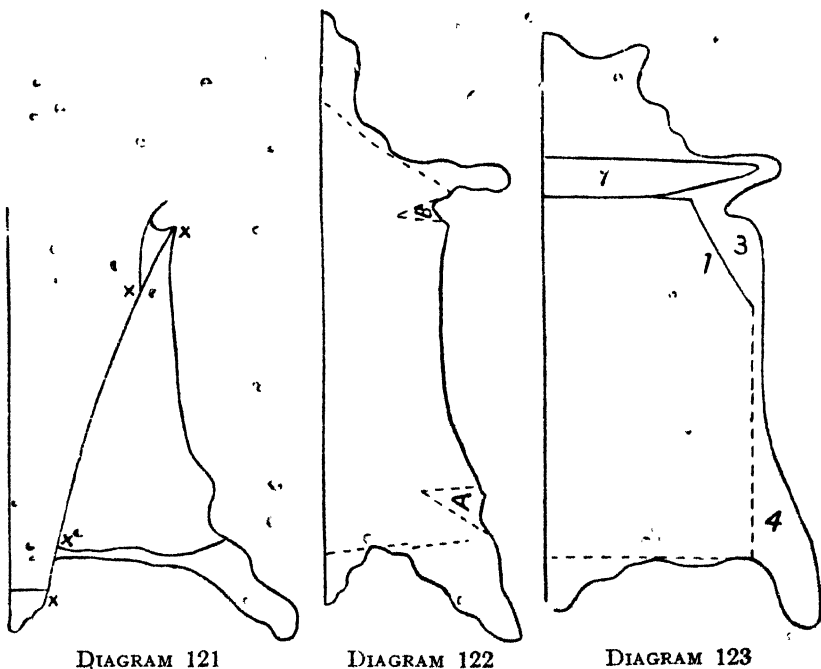
be applied if it is desired to utilise every available inch of the skin in making an article.

The cut is made from the point indicated in diagram 121, and is lowered to the level of the rump of the skin, after the extreme point of the rump has been removed. If a square is required, the piece which forms the top portion of the hind paws may be inserted into the narrower part of the skin. Again, the narrowest region can be made up from parts

FURS AND FURRIERY

removed from the head. Thus a perfect square is obtained and as much material as possible utilised. Diagram is lettered for guidance.

The Persian being a skin which is used very extensively for collars, it is perhaps advisable to make



mention of a method whereby a one-skin collar is obtained.

After the skin has been split, portions are removed from below the front paws and above the hind paws and are sewn together marked A and B. Thus we have a rounded effect for our collar with the shortages remedied at the same time. To understand this clearly, the reader is referred to diagram 122. A further method of squaring the Persian is given in diagram

PERSIAN LAMB

123, and is used when the cleanest effect is desired. It will be seen that the head of the skin is entirely cut away, whilst the parts marked 1 are obtained from the level of the front paws. These are turned and joined in order to leave a perfect skin. Portions marked 3 and 4 are considered too poor to be put to any use. The procedure is repeated on each side of the skin.

Persians are used in the greatest quantities for jacket work. In order, therefore, to cover all points in the working of this skin, it is best to take the making of such a garment in all its stages.

Cleanliness in all details cannot be too strenuously insisted upon, as dust and dirt are more injurious to the lustre of the Persian than to any other skin.

Working to measure is another important point. The length and breadth of each skin should be carefully measured, in order that the correct amount of skins be obtained for the garment, making it neither too large nor too small. Thus we avoid giving undue trouble to the nailer.

For the coat in question we shall require thirty-three skins, which are given to the cutter as the approximate amount to be used. We take it that the thirty-three skins have been accurately matched. Should there be a slight difference in curl, all skins which match should be placed into one part of the coat. On the other hand, the curls may all be of a medium type, some, however, may be tight, others loose, whilst, again, some are a little larger than others. Twelve of the choicest skins should first be selected and reserved for the back of the coat.

Twelve being a rather large number the choice of these should be made first, five finer skins are chosen

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from the remaining twenty-one skins and placed aside for the sleeves and revers. A portion of one skin out of the twelve for the back is used for the over-collar. This leaves sixteen skins, out of which a pair of fronts, under-sleeves and under-collar must be secured. Fourteen of the remaining skins are then matched for the purpose of forming the fronts. These fourteen skins are again carefully matched, placing the same type of skin in the same portion of each front, the better skins to the chest portion and the remainder to the side. Two skins are then left to dispose of. Although they are for the under-sleeves and under-collar they should not be of a too

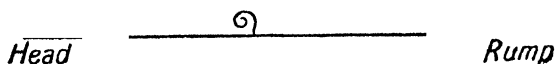


DIAGRAM 124

inferior quality, for often a good garment is spoilt if the skins used for these parts are very inferior.

At this stage the skins for each portion of the coat have been matched and put aside. By doing so in the manner stated the finest skins are thrown to the front in the prominent parts, the poorer skins forming the less noticeable parts.

Before proceeding with the cutting, however, one skin should undergo a minute examination for the purpose of thoroughly understanding the curl. This is an important factor, for it enables one not only to know how the work is executed but also the reason for so doing. On examination, the head of the skin is found to possess large coarse curls. The curl then continues rather evenly down the skin, improving in quality until it reaches the choicest part, which is the

PERSIAN LAMB

extreme rump. The curl so far as the width is concerned is finest in the middle of the skin, running poorer towards the side, being at its worst at the side itself.

The curls of a Persian wind in the direction of the head, as per diagram 124. There is a distinct bareness in the region of the front paws, which has to be remedied. Diagram 125 shows how this can be effected. Either a tongue is drawn to remedy the bareness or a suitable piece inserted. The former method is the one usually adopted when no odd pieces are available, but should the cutter be in possession of such, the latter method should be employed, as the Persian skin lends itself to piecing and will secure a larger skin for working purposes. Portion marked B, in diagram 125 matches in most cases, and should preferably be used to 'shifting.' Piece marked A in diagram 125 will match shoulder shortage which will occur when greatest possible size of skin is needed (see diagram 125). The part of the coat which requires first attention in the working is the centre back, which balances evenly the remainder of the coat on either side. Of

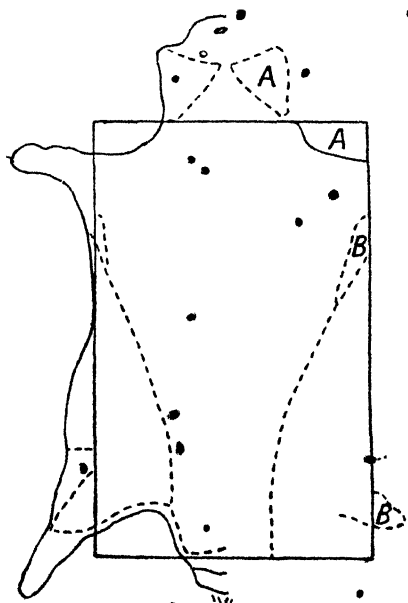


DIAGRAM 125

ing purposes. Portion marked B, in diagram 125 matches in most cases, and should preferably be used to 'shifting.' Piece marked A in diagram 125 will match shoulder shortage which will occur when greatest possible size of skin is needed (see diagram 125). The part of the coat which requires first attention in the working is the centre back, which balances evenly the remainder of the coat on either side. Of

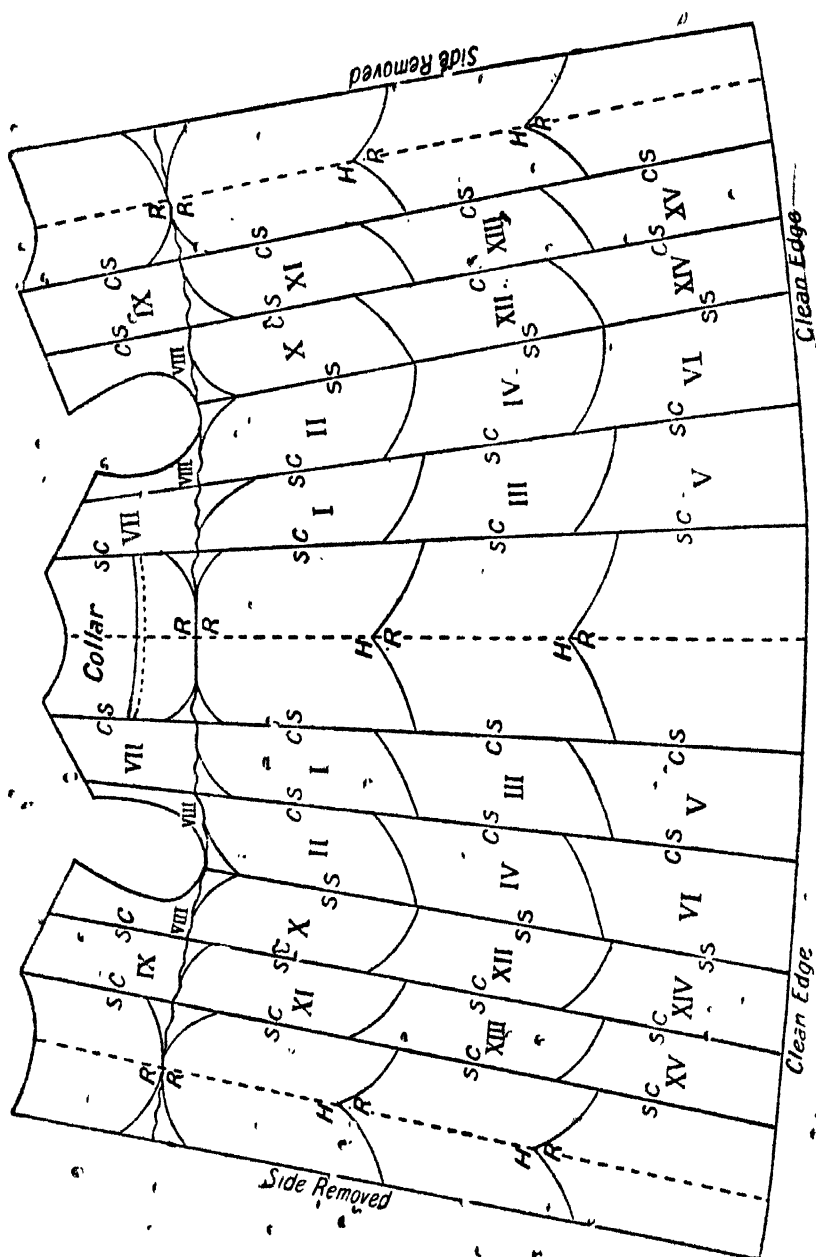


DIAGRAM 126

PERSIAN LAMB

the twelve skins which are laid aside for the back, three of the choicest are used to form the centre; the remaining nine are placed on either side of these, the smaller skins to the top and the larger to the bottom. A portion of one of these three choice skins is reserved for the collar. The two uppermost skins nearest the nape of the neck are joined rump to rump, whilst the rump of the lower and third skin is inserted into the skin above. Diagram 126 illustrates the method and it will be seen that the first two skins which are sewn rump to rump are joined by a straight seam. If an irregular seam is adopted, it would make a perfect join in the most prominent part of the body.

The remaining nine skins are split and placed as per diagram 126. The object of this is to minimise the poorer parts of the skins. By adopting this method we obtain irregular seams and prevent two poor sides being joined together, which would only lead to the display of general poorness in one particular part. The same happens with regard to the heads and rumps. By inserting the rump into the head of the skin, the poorness of the latter is distributed.

With regard to the actual joining seam it will be noticed that the good rump is inserted well down the skin, bringing it to the level of the good part of the skin. The head and side being the poorest parts these two are joined, making the seam perfect. A further advantage of this method is that as much as possible of the natural shape of the skin is retained, thus, preventing waste and straight cross-seams. Cuts should be avoided as much as possible as these are liable to part the curl.

The centres are joined to the sides thus insuring

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not only quality on either side in the appearance of the back, but also halving the weaker sides of the skin as described above. The illustration clearly shows that on splitting the skins half of each skin is placed on either side of the centre of the back. Each skin is treated in the same manner. One is run into the other and the heads are let into the rumps, except in the prominent portion at the back, as shown in diagram 126. It will again be clearly seen that in the width the sides join the centre of the skins. Skins worked in the back of the garment in the above manner will give uniformity to the whole back, which is the result aimed at from the first. The joining seams have been made as irregular as possible, and at the same time the skins have been used to the best advantage.

It will be noticed that the cut, as diagram 125, is adopted in the joining of the rumps on every occasion except in the first and second skins of the back, the reason being that any collection of seams in so prominent a part of the coat would not improve the appearance. A method of squaring and joining skins, as indicated in diagram 132, page 245 (Broadtail), is often resorted to. All other points are carried out as stated.

Our next consideration is given to the fronts of the coat, for which fourteen skins have been allotted. These should be worked in the following fashion. The principles shown in diagram 124, which illustrate the roll of the curl, must be borne in mind. Skins, therefore, which occupy that portion of a garment which is likely to receive friction must be worked rump up. Otherwise the curl would be untravelled in the wear.

PERSIAN LAMB

The better skins are placed intact to the extreme front.

The coat will need a hem, which, when effected, will bring the better part of the skin to the edge of the garment, thus improving the appearance generally. The rest of the skins are split as per diagram 126 and placed side to centre on either side. Half of each skin is placed on either front. This process is repeated until the whole front is covered. The effect of putting half of each skin on either side gives equality to the coat.

The skin for the revers is also split, the centre forming the outside, whilst as much as possible of the poor side is turned in. Our attention is next paid to the sleeves of the coat, which

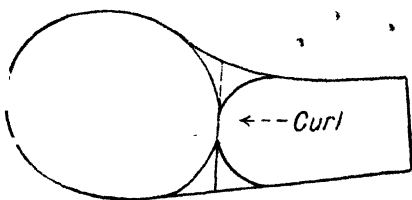


DIAGRAM 127

should be worked rumps to the elbow. On no account must the skins be split in this case, as no advantage is gained thereby. By working the rumps at the elbow, as in diagram 127, the downward movement in the wear at that portion is with and not against the curl. The portion removed from the skin at the nape of the neck should be replaced by another skin, thus in the working of the collar a perfect match is secured in the top collar and across the back, which is necessary as both these parts catch the eye at the same time. The fronts and backs should then be closed and passed to the nailer.

Nailing.—In the damping of a Persian coat prior to the process of nailing, the seams should be well

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damped and the hair kept quite dry and free from any chalk. The article should be placed across the nailing board hair up, fastened at the nape of the neck and pulled to the required length. The tighter portions of the coat should next be nailed, leaving the fuller parts until the last. A nailer will experience a little more difficulty in the nailing of a Persian coat since the damp leather has a tendency to cling to the board. This will often make it difficult to obtain the fullest stretch. Any gores required in the coat should be cut, whilst the nails should be tacked round. This allows the cutter to sew back the gore and obtain a perfect match. The nailer should knock his nails close to the edge as well as close together. In the event of the latter not being done gaps are likely to be formed, which will not permit the cutter to straighten off the garment satisfactorily.

All other points in nailing will be found under the heading of NAILING, page 58.

"In the drying off of the Persian coat it will often be found that in damp weather artificial heat is needed. The board should therefore be placed to the fire, the back of the board nearest.

With regard to the actual finishing of the garment, a little acid (see formula No. 6, page 354) could be applied to restore any lustre lost in the work. The Persian should be dabbed and not rubbed in any way.

Setting, combing and beating should not be resorted to, as these processes have a harmful effect on the skin.

CHAPTER XXXII

CARACAL

Natural History, Etc.

THE caracal is a member of the lynx family. It derives its name from the Turkish word meaning "black-eared." In colour it varies from a pale brown to a red chestnut. It has a short tail and long black ears, and has a very pugnacious expression. The back of the animal is covered with pronounced black spots, whilst the belly is paler in shade to that of the back.

It inhabits Asia and is known to be a very fine climber. The skin is classified amongst the cheaper variety of furs. The different types of caracal which are met with vary to a very great extent, experts being able to determine exactly from which place a particular class of skin comes. The qualities are numerous, varying from a very fine broad-tail pattern to a coarse, thick-coated skin.

The description given to the various crosses by the brokers are the following—

• *Flat Moire*.—Moire marking of a flat nature.

Flat Pattern.—Flat crosses with little marking.

Short Wavy.—Crosses not long in the pile, of a wavy nature.

The terms are often more clearly defined, but either indicate that a cross is flat and of good pattern, or coarse and of no pattern. Kid skins are utilised in crosses and often sold as caracal.

Practical Working

The greatest quantity of skins used in the trade

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are those obtained by the manufacturer in the form of crosses, which are placed together by the Chinese people. Skins are sewn together head to head, the remaining skins are split, half of each skin being placed opposite the other thus forming a cross as diagram 129. This skin would be a much greater

favourite of the furrier if it were not for the fact that the dye causes the skin to become exceedingly tender.

To form a good basis of work it would perhaps be best to take a lesson from the Chinese who make crosses. These are made up of a number of skins put together in such a fashion as to intermingle the good and bad parts of the skin, thereby showing the best results. It causes uniformity over the whole cross and appears like one big skin. Diagram 129 shows the method adopted by the Chinese people for placing

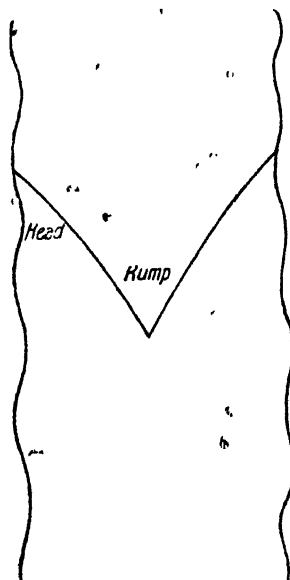


DIAGRAM 128

these crosses together. With regard to the working of the single skins, irregularity should be studied, as is depicted in diagram 128.

In the joining of skins together the head should be inserted into the rump (diagram 128). As few seams as possible are used and no elaborate work is put into the skin, so far as drops are concerned, sides joining seams irregularly as (diagram 128).

CARACAL

By joining side seams as well as cross seams in an irregular fashion, the possibility of any skin showing is minimised. The skin lends itself to piecing, and should a shortage occur one can join a piece with a certain amount of security so that if it is well matched it will not show.

When working crosses all hand-sewn seams must be machined over, for otherwise they prove to be weak.

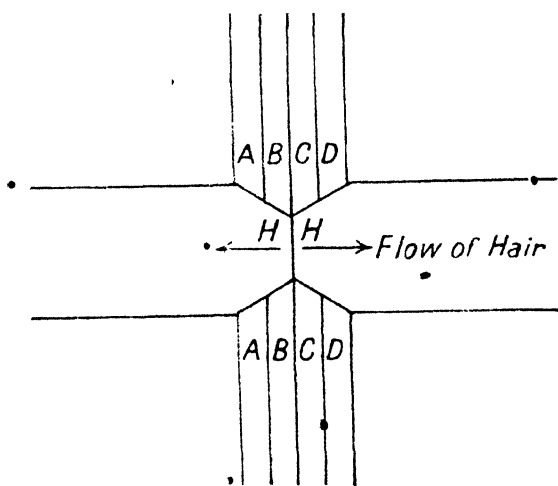


DIAGRAM 129

The cross must be carefully taken apart and used in a manner which will bring the good part to the front and place the poorer part in a less prominent position.

Both in the working of skins and crosses care should be taken that prominent parts such as the collar, sleeves and back of the coat should contain the best material at one's disposal, whilst working the poorer material to the sides of both back and fronts.

In the working of caracal the greatest feature is strength and softness of the garment. In order to

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obtain the former as well as the latter, we must back the leather for strengthening and at the same time use a process which will not make the article brittle.

The following methods are adopted :—Rubber solution under thin lawn or very thin starch and butter muslin.

With regard to the cleansing, a little acid should be used. This will tend to restore any lustre lost in the working (see formula No. 6, page 354).

Nailing.—The important points to be noted in the nailing of caracal coats are a plentiful supply of material, as no stretching can be obtained from the skin itself, and care should be taken that a clean board, free from chalk, is used. For further information see NAILING, page 58.

CHAPTER XXXIII

GOATS

French : *Chèvre* • German : *Ziege*

Natural History •

Of late years the goat has become a more or less widely-used skin in the trade, especially since the advent of inflated prices in furs (years 1916-1920). The purposes to which this skin is put are for making inferior muffs and ties, and also for trimmings in inferior fur coats and cloth coats. It has also been used for many years as rugs for floors and carriages, whilst felt-makers also find use for certain silky types of goats. The pelt is good material for the making of parchment ; its uses for this purpose date far back.

Goats come from various places, but the bulk of those used in the fur trade reach us from China and Africa. The latter type is usually whitish, whilst the former vary in colour.

They roam on the Asiatic hills and mountains, as in Manchuria, where they are plentiful ; they are also allowed to roam freely in the grounds of landed proprietors. They are grey, black, mottled and fawn in colour ; some specimens are also white. The most noted type is the angora, a white, fine specimen of goat, silky and full furred.

• All goats are dyed black, grey or skunk colour, except the white type which are bleached. It is important to mention that experience is needed in the choice of these skins, all skins not taking the various dyes in the same manner. The variation in the price of any particular skin depends upon the

FURS AND FURRIERY

silkeness of the coat. The shaggy and rough-coated skins are used for carriage and floor rugs. A fine, large skin is obtained from South Africa, and is in value next to the angora.

Practical Working

There is very little to emphasise in the working of goat skins, as these skins are not given to advantageous stretching into particular shapes. The working of the skin is more a question of manipulation. In addition it is desirable that skins be worked in quantities rather than singly. It would be preferable to work two ties from one skin and two muffs from another, to obtaining a set of furs from each skin, that is, if the shapes permit of this being done. The skin is used for trimming to a great extent, especially for cloth coats.

The skin will need softening, and any seams which are sewn are not likely to show. The skin should be nailed first in order that a cutter may know how much material is at his disposal. Taping is resorted to when the undergrowth is thick enough to permit same. The general principles of bear are applicable in the case of goats.

The silkiest parts of the goat are its head and neck, the middle of the skin being of a medium straight texture. The coarsest part is the rump.

The centre of the goat must be kept in place, as otherwise the hairs on either side would be disarranged. For further points the broad principles of furriery are applicable.

— In nailing the skin the leather should be damped in warm water to obtain greater stretch.

CHAPTER XXXIV

BROADTAIL

German : *Breitschwauze*

Natural History

THE broadtail is said to be the unborn lamb which is taken from the mother before birth; a great deal of trash has, from time to time, been written as to the slaying of the Persian lamb for the unborn young. Needless to say, this is not the case.

In appearance the broadtail, which is about 10 in. in length at the outside, has a water-mark pattern and is very beautiful and delicate. The pelt of the skin is exceedingly tender and thin.

The value of this skin rises according to whether it is free of damage, holes, etc. A skin, therefore, possessing a fine water-mark and free from blemishes will fetch a very good price.

On the other hand the broadtail with holes or other damages is practically worthless.

The skin is dyed black.

Practical Working

The rare broadtail skin needs working most gingerly because of its delicacy. Cleanliness is of utmost importance in spite of the fact that the skin is black. This skin has the flattest coat of any in the trade. Elaborate forms of cuts, therefore, are out of the question so far as it is concerned.

To touch satisfactorily upon every point dealing

FURS AND FURRIERY

with broadtail, we shall endeavour to illustrate the method of making a coat.

A number of well-matched skins should be procured. Although there is very little difference in the pile of a broadtail, a great difference does exist in the pattern.

Having secured the requisite number of skins for a coat, which are all of the same marking, the choicest

specimens are put aside for the prominent parts, namely, the collar, revers, sleeves and cuffs. The remainder are used for the body of the coat. Of these, again, a number is selected to form the middle of the back of the coat.

The best of those which are then left are used for the extreme fronts, whilst the others are put aside for the body and form the sides of the back and fronts of the coat.

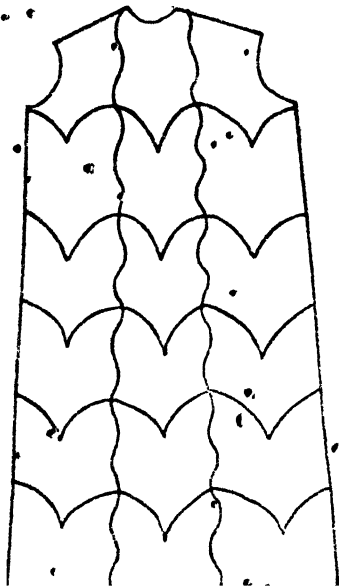


DIAGRAM 131

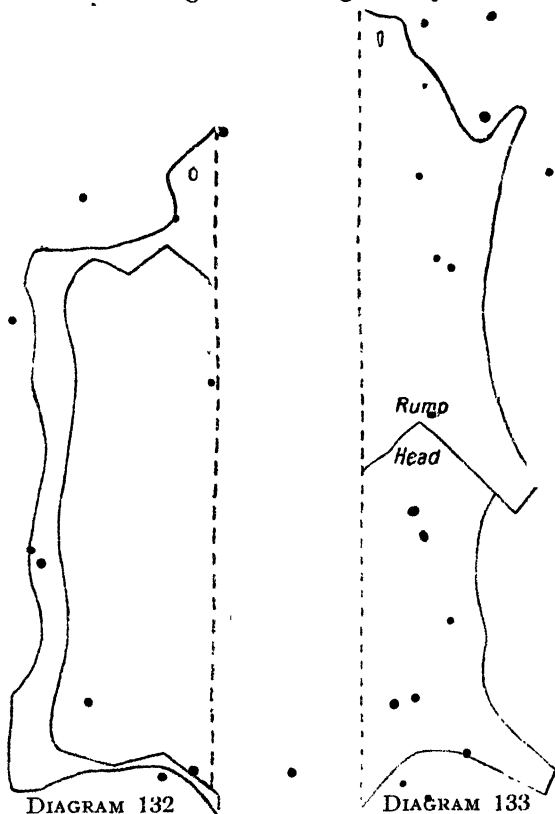
If the skins are sorted in this fashion, the best material is displayed in the most prominent parts of the garment.

The whole of the coat must appear as though made of one skin, and irregularity in the joining of seams should therefore be studied.

As will be seen in diagram 131, the rumps of the uppermost skins are inserted into the heads of those underneath, thus forming an irregular seam. The

BROADTAIL

side seams as per diagram are made wavy and irregular. This method is adopted in all parts of the coat, aiming at uniformity. A further method is given in diagram 132 of joining broadtail skins. The object aimed at is to obtain greater irregularity. This method



is favoured by many workers especially those abroad. It will be seen that the extreme rump is used. Diagram 133 shows the method to be adopted for the making of a pair of sleeves. Irregularity again forms the point of importance.

The sleeves, collar and cuffs of the coat should be

FURS 'AND FURRIERY

worked so that the central part of the skin is thrown foremost, this part being much superior to the sides in quality. The manner of placing the skins in position for the collar and cuffs is decided by the worker according to their final appearance.

"This irregularity in the working mingles with the water-mark and the possibilities of the seams showing are therefore minimised.

Fine and careful work is warranted in the working of a broadtail coat, for it is certainly one of the most expensive skins in the trade.

Seams should be sewn by hand and not by machine, making the possibility of the join showing less.

Any hole or damage in the broadtail should ban a skin for an important position in the garment. In removing the damage use a simple cut with fewest seams.

In the finishing of the garment it should be backed with linen to avoid any tearing.

The appearance of the skin is improved when worked in combination with other furs. Other points will be found under the heading of Persians, page 225.

Nailing.—The nailer should realise in the nailing of a broadtail coat that it must be delicately handled. A sheet of brown paper should be placed across the board, to avoid any chalk alighting on the skin which would tend to spoil the lustre.

The garment should be nailed with as little stretch as possible, and the irregular seams should be fastened by pins.

It should be dried naturally and not by artificial heat.

All other points in nailing will be found under the heading *NAILING*, page 58. Formula No. 6, page 354, gives a recipe for restoring lustre.

CHAPTER XXXV

BEARS

French : *Ours* German : *Bär*

Natural History, Etc.

VARIOUS types of bears are trapped, the coats being of great utility to the fur trade.

Perhaps the most important is the Polar bear, which is found in Iceland, Greenland and the surrounding parts, as well as in Canada, Alaska and generally in the Polar regions. The animal is large, measuring about 9 ft., possessing a very short tail not more than a few inches in length. It is white in appearance, and the skin is used for the purpose of making magnificent rugs. The coat is very close and silvery. There are also long water hairs sprinkled over the coat, measuring about 6 in. in length.

Nature has well clothed the Polar bear to enable it to endure the rigours of the climate in which it is found. Every inch of its body is protected by the beautiful soft, white fur.

It is a carnivorous beast, existing on any smaller animals which it is able to capture, including the seal.

The Isabelline bear, which is brown in colour, shaded with grizzly hairs, comes from Burma and India generally. The Caucasus, as well as Norway and Sweden produce the Russian bear, known as the Brown bear, which is of a greyish tint. The real brown bear, however, is trapped in North America,

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Alaska, and various parts of the Dominion of Canada. In colour it varies from a light to a very dark brown. The hair is of excellent texture, the pelt being very thick. The underground is of a purplish tint. It is usually found in mountainous districts and wooded lands.

The Black bear, which comes from North America is, as its name denotes, black in colour and possesses a very good coat of soft hair. Whilst a cub, it is grey in hue, and does not develop its dark coat until it is two or three years old. It sheds its hairs twice a year, and is best trapped in the early winter, when the coat is at its finest. The animal is of a hibernating nature.

It is of great value, both for the skin and the grease obtained therefrom.

The Cinnamon bear, which comes from Alaska, is very large in size. The skin is used for the purposes of rug-making only.

The Sloth bear, which is found in East India, is very small in size and covered with coarse, black hair.

The Grizzly bear, which is by far the strongest and most ferocious of all, is a source of great trouble to the trapper. It is found chiefly in North America. It measures about 9 ft. in length, and is dark and grizzly in hue, the skin being very rough to the touch. The cub of the grizzly is brown in colour. Not many of these skins are obtainable. The trapper is able to trace the movements of the bear by the paw marks it leaves in the snow.

In classifying the skins for sale under the hammer, the following classification is made—

BEARS

1st.—The best skins contained in the parcel for quality.

2nd.—The skins which are not of sufficiently good quality to be included in No. 1 grade.

1st and 2nd.—When an insufficient number of skins are contained in a parcel, the 1st and 2nd grades are combined.

1st and 2nd (*Medium*) refers to size only grades as above.

1st and 2nd (*Cub*) would be the young bear of grades 1 and 2.

2nd (*Low*) is the phrase used in classifying the grade lower than 2nd (*Ordinary*).

3rd.—Poor skins, not good enough to be classified with any of the previous lots on account of a particular defect.

4th.—A flat, poor skin or one badly damaged.

5th.—The poorest of any in the parcel.

1st and 2nd *Woolly* and 1st and 2nd *Rough* are often defined in separate classes.

Practical Working

As will be noticed in the natural history of the bear, there are a great variety of these animals, all of which, however, cannot be used for the purpose of wearing apparel.

The types of bear which may be used for this purpose are those silky in the hair and thin in the pelt.

Those which are coarser and thicker in the pelt are converted into rugs.

• We shall, however, only deal with the former type.

Bears are worked in quantities by houses who make a speciality of this skin, but, nevertheless, all workers

FURS' AND FURRIERY

should make themselves acquainted with the general outlines of the working of this animal. Manipulation is a great point in the manufacture of articles in bear skins.

Careful measurements should be taken in deciding whether muffs or ties or both can be obtained economically from the skins, which are generally large in size. The chief point to consider is that no waste results in the working.

The extreme sides of the bear cannot be used, and should therefore be removed. The paws are different in texture from the remainder of the skin and should be cut away.

The skin may be used so far as the limits shown in diagram, the extreme head being removed.

To make a roll collar and cuffs in the most economical manner, a cub bear is selected for the purpose.

The method as described permits one to use every piece of the skin, and at the same time the best portions are displayed in the prominent parts of the article. The skin is split down the centre, the eyes being cut through and sewn. A portion is selected from the rump of the skin to form the cuffs; this is removed. The remainder will be found wide enough to form the back of the collar, whilst the eyes form the last point at the other end. In making a square collar of bear the following method will be found the most preferable: Remove a portion at the head to the level of the front paws; this forms the cuffs. Divide the remainder of the skin into four parts. Join the uppermost quarters side to side, and sew on each lower quarter to the first quarter's centre to centre. Thus, if the quarters were lettered as

BEARS

follows, A and B, C and D, A side would join B side, C centre would join B centre, whilst D centre would join A centre.

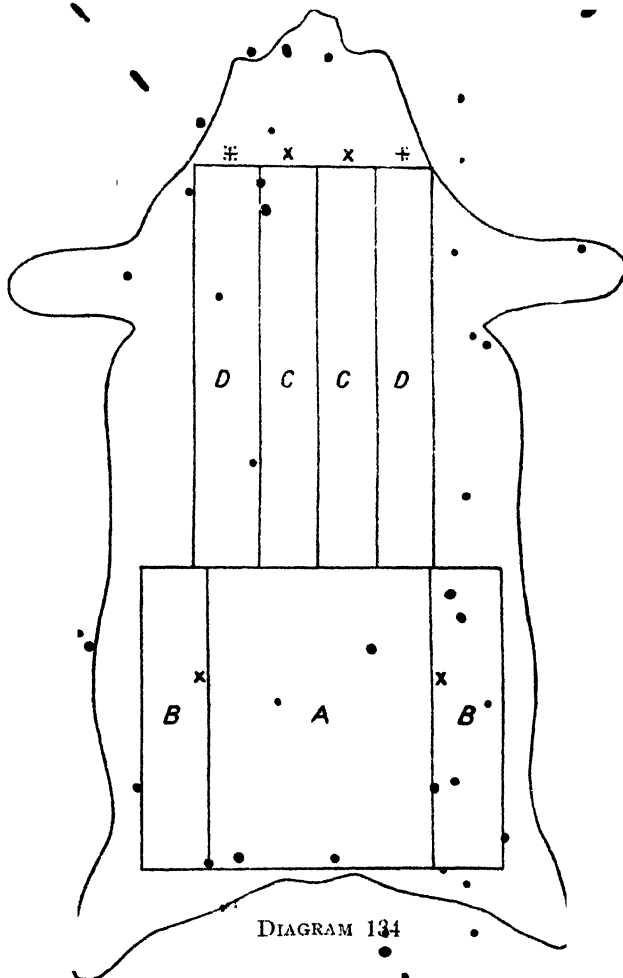


DIAGRAM 134

Diagram 134 describes a method of obtaining two muffs and two ties from one bear skin. A forms one muff, whilst one half of B is joined to the other, forming the second muff.

FURS AND FURRIERY

The ties are lettered CD and are joined at the head. If the worker feels he can obtain a better effect by halving ties and joining, he may do so with security. In the case of this method being adopted the tie should be cut on level of lettering D C C D on diagram 134.

In the matching of bears a keen eye is necessary, as many shades are disclosed. A liberal application of the comb will help in the freeing the hairs, and so facilitate matching.

Bears possessing a thick woolly underground are often taped, in order to secure extra width or length. Bears should be set and well beaten, and are further improved by ironing.

Nailing.—Points in nailing are those applied to the general trade. The article should be thoroughly damped with warm water to secure stretch.

(For nailing, see page 58.)

CHAPTER XXXVI

SEAL

French : *Phoque* German *Seehund*

Natural History, Etc.

THE seal skin is of great importance in the trade and comes from numerous places. South Georgia in the Antarctic Ocean gives us very important specimens, which have within the last few years become rarer. This skin is silver grey in colour, whilst the under-fur is very thick and the pelt very spongy.

The rounding up of the animal is usually carried out in the early hours of the morning. The men who slaughter the seals await their opportunity, and when the animals are seen to hurl themselves up in the water, they are confused by shouts, making it easy to drive them in the direction of the slaughter-house. They are struck upon the forehead with a club, which immediately stuns them. The animals are then cut along the belly from head to tail, and the skin is very rapidly detached from the carcase in order that it should not dry on the body.

The skins are then sorted and preserved. The curing takes about fourteen days. Some inches of fat are found between the coat and the carcase. The fat constitutes a valuable oil.

In the early part of the nineteenth century, plucking of seals was unknown, with the result that the value of the skin was not fully appreciated. The group of islands on the Alaska coast was famed for the huge quantities of seals found thereabouts.

SEAL

company was given the sole rights for the capture of the animals and thousands were exported by them to China, etc. Many years later America purchased Alaska. This was followed by such a haphazard trapping of the seal that it was practically exterminated. The Government just stepped in in time to avoid the total annihilation.

In 1910 the catching of the fur seal in Privilov became a Government institution, the entire catch being exported to Messrs. C. M. Lampson & Co. to be sold under the hammer.

The seal skin is dyed very successfully in England and America.

The South Sea fur seals are yellowish towards the top as well as the belly, but the fur is very good. Those specimens which are found round the Prince Edward and St. Paul's Islands—by name the San Louis fur seals—are also of a very yellow hue, but poorer in quality. West Coast seals which are caught in the Black Sea are, however, very dark in colour, their quality also being poor. The Cape fur seal, which reaches us from the Cape of Good Hope in very great quantities, is extremely flat and is not favoured very much in the trade. The Cape Horn seal, which is, however, a very well-known specimen in the trade, is caught around the Wellington Islands. It is an ugly brown in colour tending towards a greenish hue. This class of skin takes the dye most satisfactorily. The Alaska fur seal is brought into the market by the Alaska Commercial Company under contract. Great quantities of this skin are supplied to the trade. Its colour is dark running to a brown—sometimes, however, it is yellow. The

SEAL

under-hair is very thick and of a deep reddish tint.

The females of this species are smaller than the males—exceptionally so, in fact—and are apt to be very quarrelsome amongst themselves, often using their fins against one another. At a certain period in the year, namely, during the early part of June, the males are known to take up advantageous positions ready to receive the females who come up from the sea. The males arrive quite a month earlier than their prospective brides. The strongest occupy the best points of vantage which enable them to obtain the first choice, and dissension often occurs amongst the males in their fight for the most prominent positions. They are known to have abstained from food for fear of losing their place. The females make their appearance about the middle of June, and this fact very soon produces havoc amongst the males. The latter make their selections, the strongest naturally securing the greater numbers and the most beautiful of the females.

The Copper Island seal which comes from a place of that name near Russia is not quite so good in quality as the Alaska seal. It is generally lighter in colour, but the quantities received are very good in number.

There are various other types of seal, including those frequenting Australia, New Zealand, Lima and the Lobos Islands, as well as those found near Robben Island.

Practical Working

The following are the main points to be borne in mind in the working of seal skins. The cutter should

FURS AND FURRIERY

manipulate the skin according to his own discretion. Each skin should occupy a position in the garment where it shows to best advantage. Quality should be taken into consideration as well as size, the largest skins being used for the large portions of the garment, provided the quality warrants such a position of prominence. One should also remember that skins coming from one particular district must not be worked together with those of another district. The combination of the various types will ultimately show during the process of wear if not at the time of making.

The skins used in a garment should be very carefully matched and should possess the same lustre. They should also be the same in colour so far as the underground is concerned. The reader is here reminded that seal skins are always dyed black, some skins taking the dye differently from others. This, of course, makes an important feature in the matching. Qualities should be looked to. In order to test the quality of a seal skin, the hand should be passed across the skin in a downward and upward motion. If the skin is of a good quality it will be silky and free to the touch.

Uniformity should be carefully studied, so that the finished garment looks as near as possible as though it were made of one huge skin. We are assisted in this, as the thick growth of hair which tends to cover any seams made, enables us to piece shortages which may occur, without injuring the appearance of the coat. By placing leather to leather one is able to examine the growth of hair. This, of course, must be effected with care and discretion. The seams should be sewn very finely, and whenever possible an

SEAL

irregular or Vandyke seam should be used. Cross seams should be avoided. The skin should be free from damages before work is commenced and

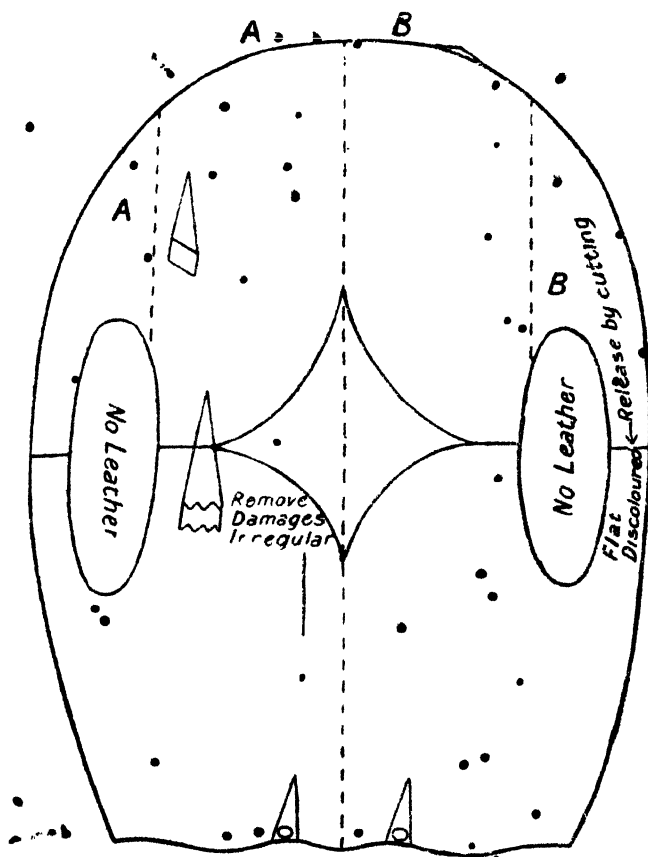


DIAGRAM 135

irregularity studied in the removing of same, as shown in diagram 135.

Although dropping is not recommended in seals, one may, if it is found necessary, move the sides of the skin in order to obtain greater width in a certain

FURS AND FURRIERY

part, but cuts should always be moved with and not against the hair. In order to cover all points in the

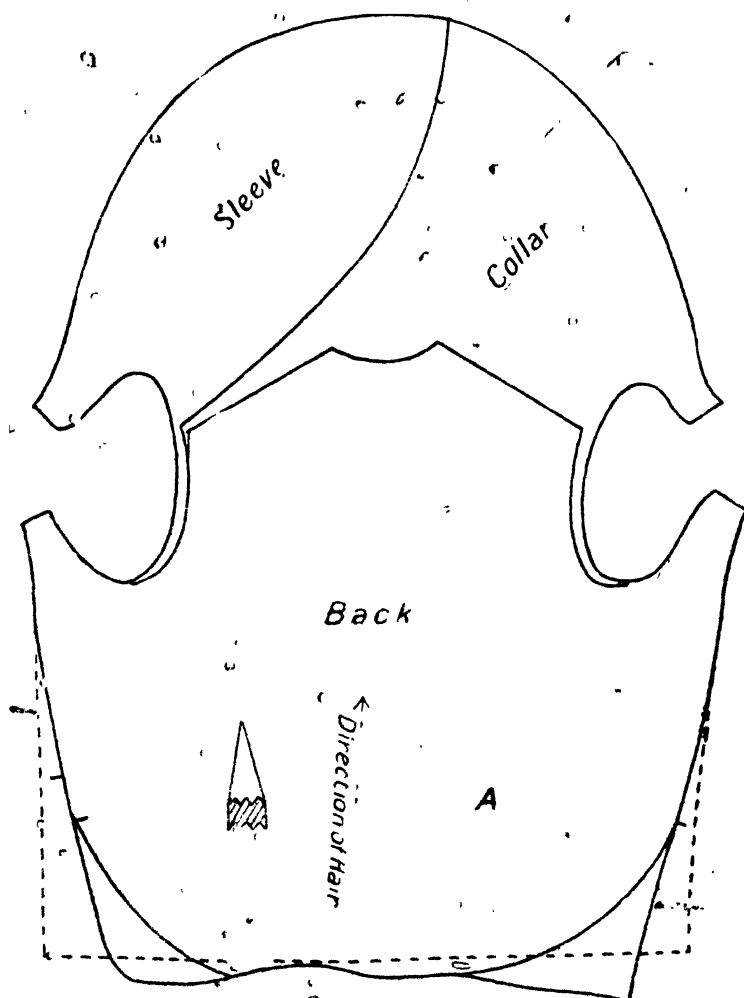


DIAGRAM 136

working of this skin, the demonstration of a coat is taken.

A solid skin being taken in hand to form the back

SEAL

of the garment, the following method is adopted. Diagram 135 shows a skin in which two pieces appear

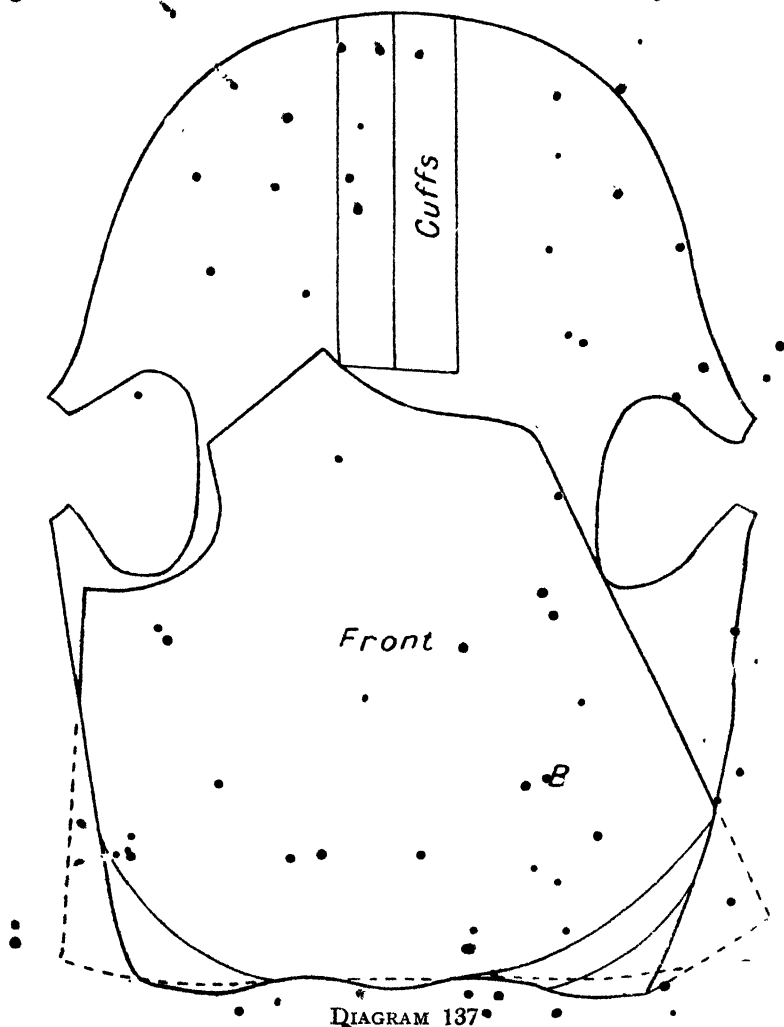


DIAGRAM 137

marked A and B. These pieces form the part above the front fins. After clearing the flat objectionable portions around the fins, these pieces, A and B, can

FURS AND FURRIERY

be carefully joined to the head by means of a Vandyke seam. It will be seen that the pièces marked A and B are an extremely good match, whilst in making most garments one experiences a shortage at the rump of the skin. A few irregular damages are also removed in diagram 135.

It will often be found that seams require laying over, which is necessary only when the higher portion is slightly fuller than the lower. The action of laying over brings the flat portion to the level of the fuller part. The method depicted tends to show the lines on which the front and the remainder are worked. Illustrations Nos. 136 and 137 show how it is possible to manipulate to advantage a small jacket of three skins. A skin gives us a back, one sleeve and half collar; whilst B skin gives us the front cuffs and revers. C skin will again produce a front, a sleeve and half collar. The seal skin is worked hair up.

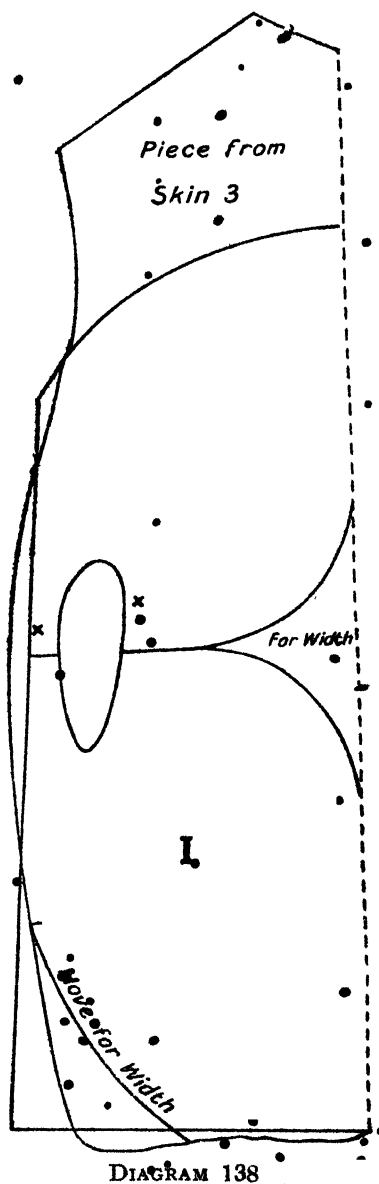
Prominent portions of the coat are worked from the finest parts of the skin. It will be noticed in diagrams 136 and 137, extra width is obtained by cuts as indicated, the dotted line showing effect when sewn. Portions near fin holes should be cut quite clean, for large portions are often flat and discoloured.

In working a full-length coat it is preferable to damp and nail skins before working, thus enabling the worker to know how much stretch is contained in the skins. Five skins are used, diagram 138 forms the back with the addition of piece obtained from the sleeve skin. It will be found that cut as demonstrated in diagram 135 must be used to obtain greater width. The cut is made in the manner shown, and let into the

SEAL

top and bottom of the skin, procuring width. Seams must be sewn by hand to obtain invisibility. Parts marked with × show to what extent the width is pulled, the crosses coming into line. Diagram 139 shows position of front with the application of piece marked in diagram 140. Cuffs and collar are obtained from parts in diagram 140, the fifth skin being used for sleeves.

Cross seams may be vandyked when by so doing one is able to make the possibility of seams showing less. In all cases the additional pieces should be joined at the top of the garment, under collar whenever possible. A further method of making a four-skin seal coat from large Cape seals is shown in diagram 141. This illustrates the back of the coat. After thoroughly damping and stretching the skin, a portion is decided on (marked with



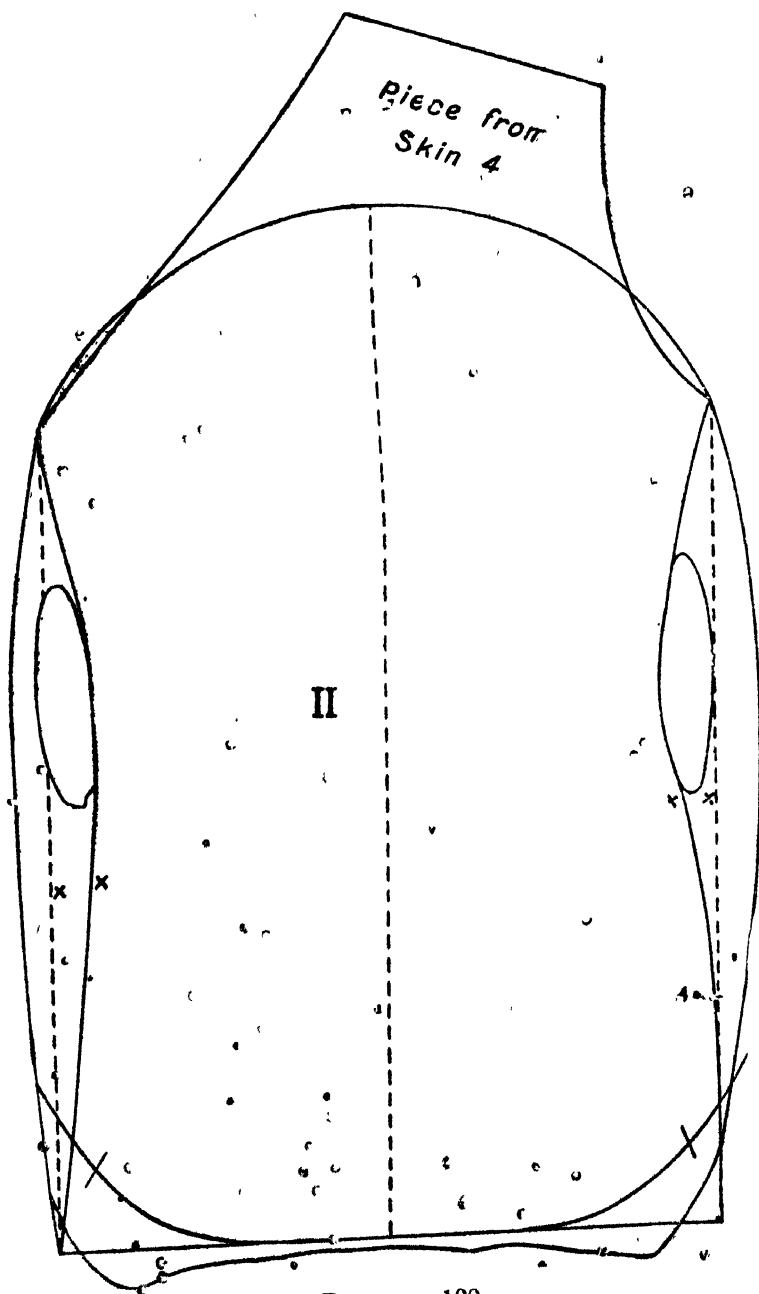


DIAGRAM 139

SEAL

an arrow) which should measure the length of the sleeve. This portion is removed and will later be used to form one sleeve. The length of the back is made up by portion marked in diagram 142. Sufficient material will be found for cuffs. The method of obtaining additional sweep is clearly shown in diagram. This method is carried out in the second skin and forms a complete back. Diagram 142 gives the front of the coat, width being obtained as already stated. A portion can be taken (marked ×) from diagram 141 and placed to diagram 142. Collar is obtained from the top of diagram 142. The cut for additional width is shown in the fronts of coat. In all cases hair must run in an upward direction. The object aimed at in removing portion for sleeves is to assure a similar grade of hair at the armhole.

Pieces are generally left in the working of seals, but can be used for undercollars, undersleeves and undercuffs.

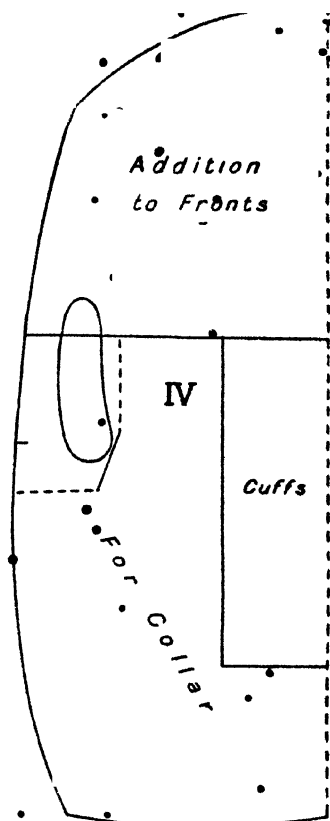


DIAGRAM 140

FURS AND FURRIERY

As previously stated, as much of the natural shape of the skin should be applied to the article by the process of nailing.

Nailing.—It will always be found necessary to nail

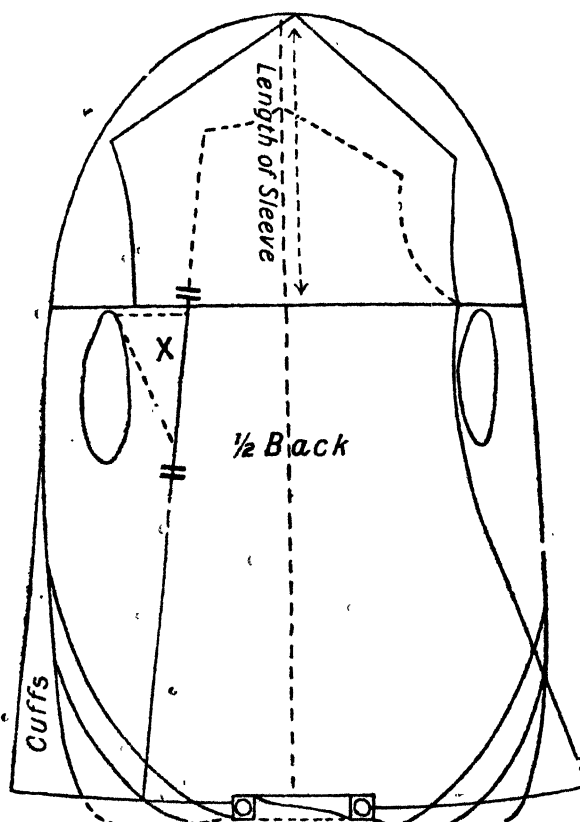


DIAGRAM 141

out skins after they have been repaired in order to discover to what extent they are likely to stretch. Stretching should be done erring in the direction of width or length according to the garment that is being

SEAL

made. The garment should be kept quite clean and damped well, preferably with hot water. It should be stretched to the shape of the pattern, care being taken that if shortages occur, they should be so arranged as

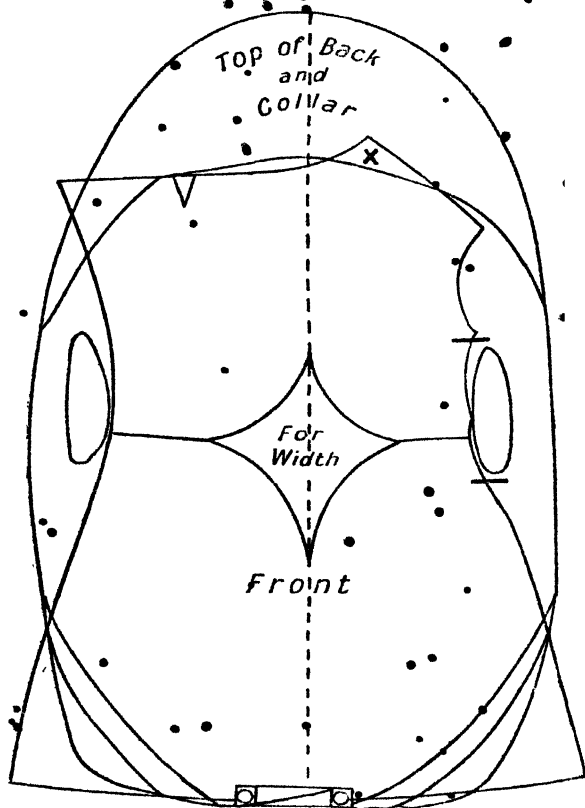


DIAGRAM 142.

not to interfere with the fitting of the coat. Nails should be knocked at the very edge of the skin and should be fastened well before pulling, as great difficulty often arises in the endeavour to get all the skin into

FURS AND FURRIERY

the pattern. In nailing, the skin should be stretched with and not against the hair. The fuller part of the skin should be moved round and worked by a gradual process into a part in which the skin is less plentiful. In the nailing of seal skins it obviously follows that the nailer's work is of far more importance than that of the cutter, for it is the nailer's duty to bring the skin to the required shape. It will be found necessary to employ two on the work of nailing as the skin is very strong in the pelt. It lends itself to an enormous amount of stretch with little fear of tears, which only occur if the few seams which may have been made are coarse.

In the nailing of a garment which possesses gores, necessitating certain suppressions being made at the waist, the nailer will find it necessary to slit the skin in order that it may be nailed in a manner which will aid the cutter to join the gore with accuracy. It should have been the cutter's duty originally to provide less material for a coat which has such gores, as the portion of the fur which belongs to the gore before removal is driven into other parts of the coat. The procedure which the nailer should adopt in the nailing of such a coat should be to mark his pattern on the board, gores showing. His coat should be placed across the board and, after having been fastened top and bottom with the centre of the back exactly in the middle, the body should be pulled to its utmost in the width and temporarily nailed. The actual back without the back gore should then be laid on the pattern, a slit being made in the seal skin along the back, and then nailed carefully to the pattern. The back gore should then be placed in position and

SEAL

nailed round the edge of the suppression, thus driving all the material at one's disposal further to the front of the coat. The garment is now handed to the cutter, who has only to place his patterns in each appropriate part of the coat and straighten same.

Hot sand should be used to remove any grease which may alight on the skin during the process of working. The skin should be beaten and set well and rubbed with a wet hand. If the skin is allowed to hang for one or two days, the hair will fall naturally and freely. •

RE-DYED SEALS

Amongst the repairs with which all workers have at some time or other to deal, seal-skin coats which have been returned for the purpose of re-dyeing and repairing are found. The reason why one so frequently comes across seal-skin coats to be treated in this way, is because the durability and long wear in this skin outlast the dye.

In the first place, the article should be ripped and repaired. Should the coat have to be re-modelled, this should be fashioned with a plentiful supply of material before it is sent to the dyers. By adopting this method we have a two-fold advantage. One is, that the added material becomes uniform in colour with the coat, and, secondly, one is safeguarded against shrinkage, which to a certain extent is unavoidable. Little stretch should be expected from re-dyed articles, as some of the natural grease has been eliminated in the wear as well as in the dyeing process.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

FITCH

French : *Putois*. German : *Ilitis*.

Natural History, Etc.

THE fitch has bestowed upon it various names, amongst which the best known are the fitchferret, foulmart and foumart. The foul odour emitted by the animal is no doubt responsible for the additional suggestive names. It is held by many to be as equally offensive as the skunk in this particular, if not worse.

The fitch reaches us from Russia, Germany, Holland France and Switzerland. In size it is a little over a foot with a tail measuring about 6 in. The skin has an undergrowth of pale yellow hair which is of a very thick texture, with long top hairs dark brown to black in shade. The hair is thickest on the rump. Towards the head it is very flat in pile, and free from all top hairs. The ears are short and white in colour. The food consists of birds, etc.

In classifying the fitch skins for sale under the hammer, the following grades are made—

1st.—Good size, quality of the best.

2nd.—Good size and colour, quality not so good.

3rd.—A flat summer skin.

4th.—A skin defective and faulty.

5th.—Throw-outs of which few can be used.

Practical Working

On studying the peculiarities of the fitch one will at once notice the flatness of the hair, which

FITCH

commences at the head of the skin and finishes up on a level with the front paws. It then becomes fairly regular in quality until it reaches the extreme rump. It is very flat towards the sides.

The skin is sometimes dyed and also worked in its natural state. The method of working in each case is exactly the same.

The centre of the skin should be marked, care being taken that the same should not be displaced. The skin should be slightly dampened and stretched; this results in a flat surface, and gives the worker a knowledge of the amount of material at his disposal.

Diagram 143 shows clearly how the objectionable part below the front paws is removed, the cuts being stretched and sewn. A circular cut is made at the rump which, when stretched, can be brought to the level of the bottom of the skin.

In the working of fitch articles, it is advisable not to remove the head if this part of the skin is required on the finished article. The head should be left on during the process of work, but mounted at a certain stage of the proceedings.

Diagram 144 gives a method which may be applied when the rounding effect is required in the fitch skin. The cut, however, should not extend further than the higher piled portion of the skin.

Cuts are made on different levels, the first coming from the stripe of the skin and the last ending on the flatter side.

The outer cut is dropped $\frac{3}{4}$ in., decreasing to $\frac{1}{4}$ in. on the inside, thus giving extra sweep on the outside of the collar.

Diagram 144 further illustrates a method which should

FURS AND FURRIERY

be employed when not quite so much roundness is required. The point marked *X* in diagram shows the side of the skin. When the skin has been cut through

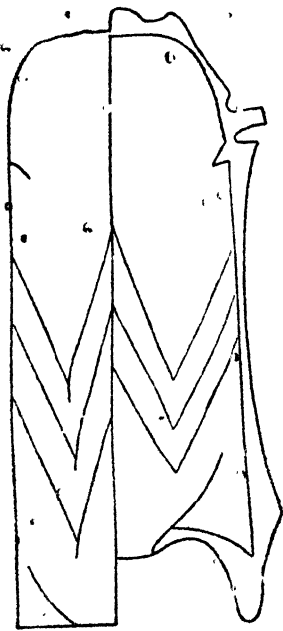


DIAGRAM 143

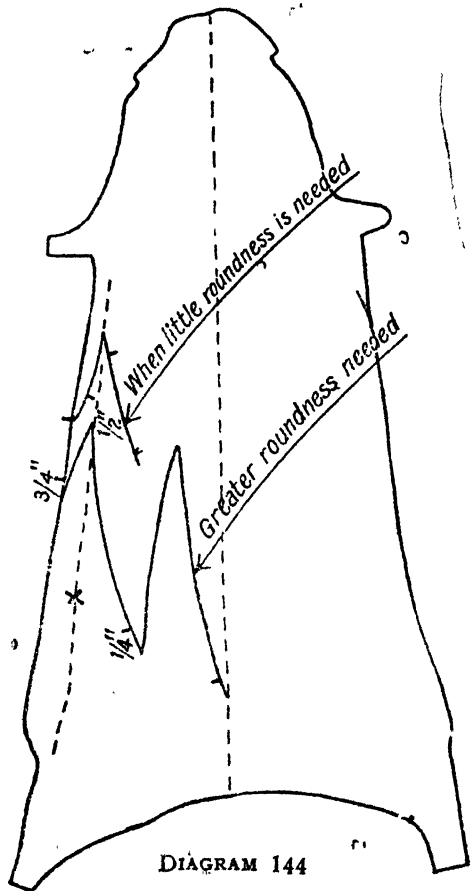


DIAGRAM 144

as indicated, a little stretch will pull same round, thus procuring the required effect.

In both cases cuts may be repeated as often as is found necessary.

The sides also are removed in the diagram, these

FITCH

being too thin for use. Any cuts which are made in fitch should be introduced well down the skin. They should on no account penetrate the flatter regions of same. The particular flat part should not be dropped at all, for any seams made are likely to show. The skin is a very pliable one, and will lend itself to

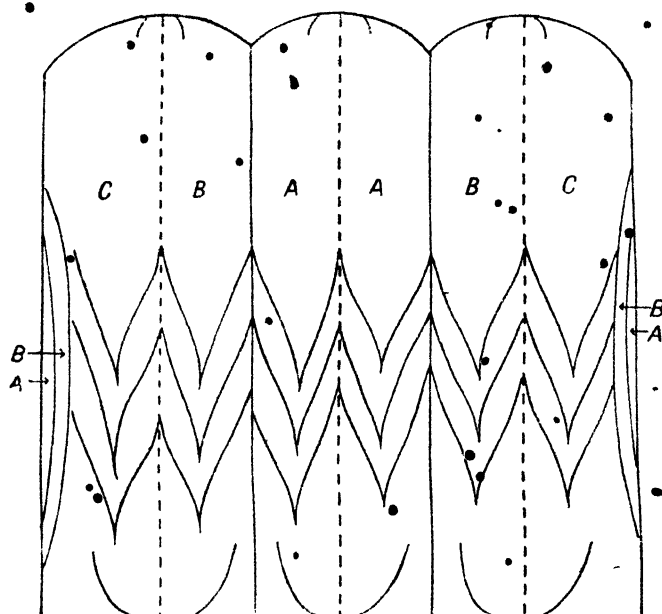


DIAGRAM 145

stretching to any required size towards the head. Any cuts for the length of the skin that may be required are shown in diagram 143. These may be repeated as often as is found necessary. Cuts should be made long and tapering to avoid puckering.

Diagram 145 gives a method of making a three-skin fitch muff. The three skins are lettered and their positions distinctly shown. A skin, the smallest, is

FURS AND FURRIERY

placed in the middle, B and C skins are split as indicated. Additional side from skins A and B may be applied to C skin.

Fitch skins may be split if in so doing greater perfection is procured in the matching thereof. This means that half of one skin is sewn to half of another, thereby making same more uniform.

The poorer kinds of fitch are often used for coat linings and in working these linings the rumps should be cut round. The heads are scalloped, one being inserted into the other. All skins should be of one size in order that the rows of skins in the coat should meet. In studying this point care should be taken that the flat portions of the skins in question are all on the same level. Seams should, whenever necessary, be laid over, as rumps in fitch skins are apt to finish very flat. For damages see page 336.

Nailing.—The principles of nailing in the case of the fitch are little different from those of any other skin.

The skin needs careful treatment, as the centre must be kept in place. The seams should be well damped, and all general points of nailing followed (*vide*, page 58).

CHAPTER XXXVIII

KOLINSKY

French : *Kolinski*. German : *Kolinski*.

Natural History

THE kolinsky, which is also known as the red sable, is quite a small animal, being about $\frac{1}{2}$ yd. long, with a 4-in. tail.

Its colour is yellowish, sometimes shaded with brown; its throat is usually marked with white patches. The pile of the hair is not very deep although thick; the ears are short.

This type of skin as a rule reaches us from Russia, especially from the district of Kola; some specimens, however, are found also in China and Japan. The finest skins come from Kusnetsk, whilst Yakutsk supplies the largest quantity.

The tail is often converted into paint-brushes by brushmakers. Kolinskies are generally dyed various shades to imitate sable and mink. It is not named in many of the English natural history books.

Practical Working

The kolinsky skin, which is usually dyed to imitate the sable, may be made to look very effective if carefully handled.

These skins, which for many years have been in and out of favour, are at the present time greatly in vogue. (1920.)

It lends itself very well to the making of coats, according to the fashion of the day. It would

FURS AND FURRIERY

perhaps therefore be advisable to deal with the making of such a coat, and thereby touch upon all points appertaining to the successful making of a kolinsky garment.

The skins selected are generally found to be of various shades, although they may all have been dyed by the same dyer and at the same time. This is due to the fact that, in its natural state, one kolinsky may be darker than another, and of a slightly different texture, so taking the dye differently. The skins should therefore be matched for pile and colour.

The finest skins should, of course, be selected for the important parts of the garment and placed over the pattern, each skin in its appropriate position. Any skins which need a little treatment owing to damages should occupy the less prominent parts of the article.

The centre of the skin should be marked before any work is begun.

After slightly damping and stretching the skin proportionately in width and length, the sides are removed as these are generally rather poor.

Sufficient of the side should be removed to enable one skin to be satisfactorily joined to the other. The more that is removed, the fuller does the pile at the edge become. The skins allotted to the bottom row of the coat should be of the same size, and may be joined by hollowing the head of the skin as well as the rump, thus using as much as possible of the material at one's disposal in each case. Another method would be to remove the head and rump with a straight cut, completing the garment by means of a straight seam running across instead of in the form of a series of arc-shaped seams. Each

KOLINSKY

skin is expected to show separately, and regularity should therefore be studied, all skins of the same size being placed in the same part of the garment. A point which is usually taken as the basis of a really good cut is that the seams of the first row of skins from the nape of the neck downwards, run continuously to the sleeve in one straight line. It is these points which, if manipulated carefully, will make for success in the putting together of a kolinsky coat.

A further method of working a kolinsky coat is that of losing the seam, thus making the length of the coat appear as from one skin. This method can be found on page 68 (sable), and is in all details the same. It should only be practised

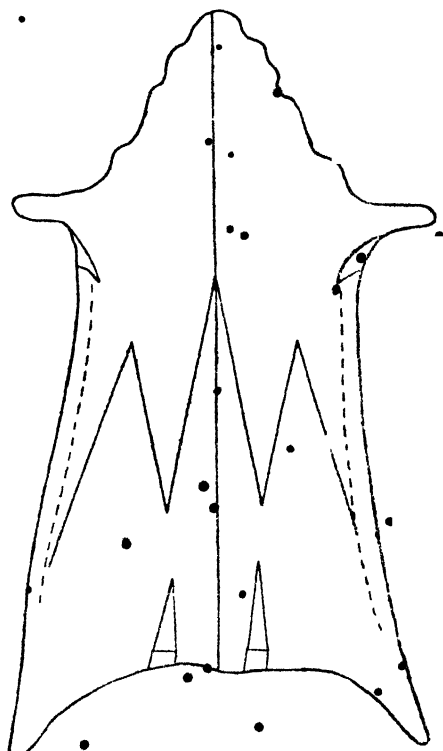


DIAGRAM 146

when skins are of a good quality, thus ensuring that seams do not show.

- The kolinsky is also used for the making of muffs and ties. The same principles may be followed as are given overleaf both in the making of coats as well as small furs.

FURS AND FURRIER.

The cut indicated in diagram 146 is one which may be used in the coat if the skins in question warrant it.

The skins in any garment or article should preferably be worked in the length rather than in the width.

If the skin has to retain the head in the finished state, this should not be removed during the working.

The skin is rather well covered with a good pile, and if seams are carefully sewn, one is able to move the skin in the length.

The bad parts under the tail should be removed by means of a tongue (see diagram 146) as also the front paw pieces, which are not required. The method of lengthening the kolinsky skin is also given in the diagram. Cuts should be long and tapering.

The amount of work in this type of skin is decided by its quality. In the very good specimens much elaborate work may be introduced; the poorer qualities do not permit of this however. General methods of rounding the skin, etc., can be found under the heading of SABLE, page 65.

The leather will usually be found to be very pliable and often the required shape is obtained without resorting to cuts.

For Nailing, refer to NAILING, page 58.

CRIMMER

Natural History

The crimmer is a member of the sheep family, and comes from the Crimean Peninsula. It possesses a

CRIMMER

curl very similar to Persian, and is a light grey in colour varying to a dark shade. The fur is not a very fashionable one nowadays and is rarely used here. Canada purchases most of the stock of this skin.

For Practical Working, *vide* PERSIAN.

CHAPTER XXXIX

RACCOON

French: *Marmotte* German: *Schuppen—Waschbär.*

Natural History.

BRITISH Columbia, the United States and parts of Canada supply the market with the racoon skin in greatest quantities. The number per year exceeds three-quarters of a million. The finest specimens emanate from Michigan and Nova Scotia. The Western States give us a medium quality, whilst the skin that comes from British Columbia is of a coarse nature.

The animal varies in size from about 18 in. to 3 ft. Its colour is grey with long white and black hairs of a bluish tint. The sides of the skin are white. Racoon skins are often of a brownish shade. The finest specimens, however, are those which are thickly furred and have a very dark centre. In general, the types of racoon vary from a light brown to almost a black.

They live and sleep in the hollows of trees, and only appear at night in order to procure food.

The racoon is known to be of a hibernating nature, and is found in marshy and swampy land as well as wooded parts.

It lives where it is most likely to obtain its food, which consists of frogs, insects and certain types of fruit. The quality of the coat depends both on the time of the year that it is caught, and the place from which it comes. A racoon caught in the northern section of the country in the early winter would give

RACCOON

a good skin. Prices are determined by colour, pile and size. The skin is most durable, and is extensively used for collars and cuffs, being too full in the pile for the ordinary fur coat. It is, however, used for motoring coats.

Practical Working

The pile of the racoon allows for the effective carrying out of elaborate work. The centre of the skin should be carefully marked as this is very pronounced.

The skin, on examination, shows that the head is very flat and the sides poor. The stripe, furthermore, it will be noticed, is wide. In order, therefore, that the appearance of the skin may be improved, cuts which are used in the length and which tend to lengthen the stripe of the skin, should be employed. Diagram 147 shows how this may be effected. It is clearly marked on diagram. Care should be taken that the cut does not penetrate the flat head. It shows how the skin may be lengthened by a series of cuts which may be repeated as often as necessary. The maximum amount of any one cut should not exceed $\frac{3}{4}$ in. The first cut, as described in the diagram, should be near the centre. If this is done the stripe will be lengthened. The sides should be dropped independently, the cut being reversed according to discretion.

It is often desired that a little of the side be left on the skin for the purpose of showing the strands, and in such a case a well-covered side only should be retained. At the head irregularity of hair is often noticeable. In order to adjust same, the following method should be practised: Remove piece in a

FURS AND FURRIERY

squared fashion, cut in strips, and place in direction of the flow of hair.

Diagram 148 shows how the objectionable parts under the front paws may be done away with. This diagram

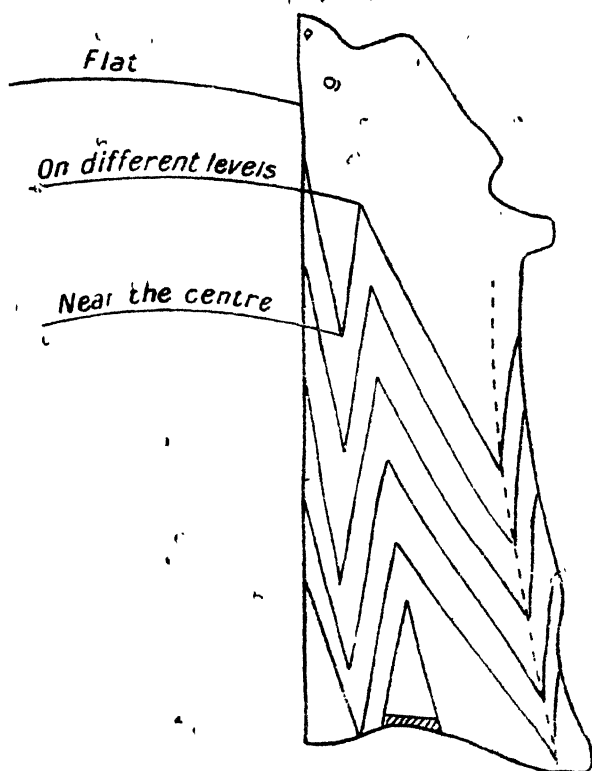


DIAGRAM 147

also explains how a one-skin muff should be made, as much of the skin as possible being utilised. A cut at the side is necessary to obtain added width at the head, whilst a tongue drawn at the rump should fill the gap left by the undesired portion under the tail. The finished and unfinished state is shown

RACCOON

A further method of making an effective stranded article in racoon is the following. The skin is split into eighteen strips as in diagram 149, the stripe of the skin extending from strip No. 7 to No. 12. The strips

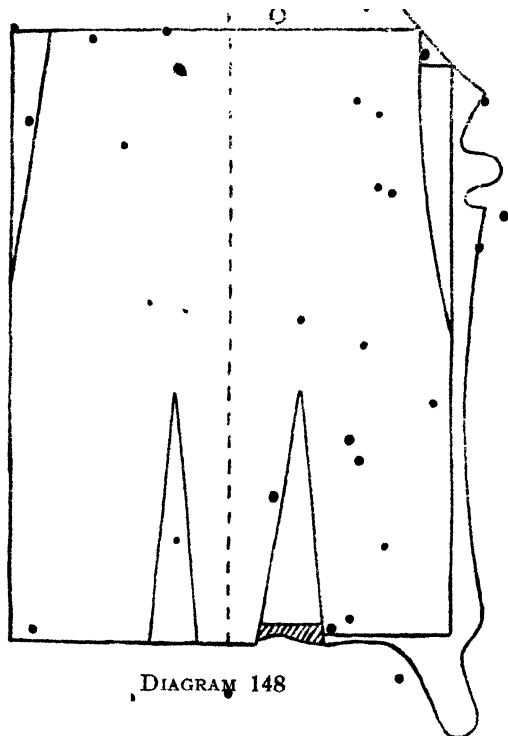


DIAGRAM 148

are placed together in the following form (diag. 150): 1, 4, 7, 12, 15, 18, which comprise one skin, smaller by about one-third of its original size. The second skin (diag. 151) is placed together as follows: 2, 5, 8, 11, 14, 17; and lastly (diag. 152), the following numbers: 3, 6, 9, 10, 13, 16. In this way three

FURS AND FURRIERY

centres and sides are obtained from one racoon skin. If the skin which is being worked is very large, more strips are permissible. The same principle can be carried out in a smaller skin in which we obtain two skins from one. These will appear as nearly as possible as three small skins. The newly-formed skins

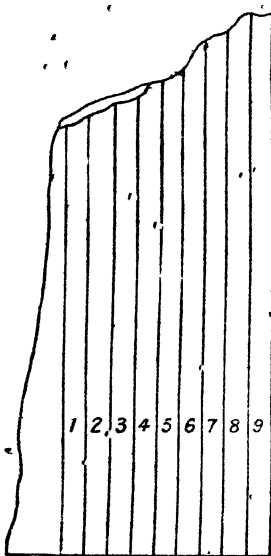


DIAGRAM 149

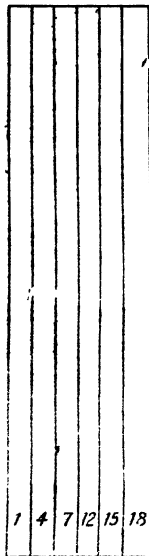


DIAGRAM 150

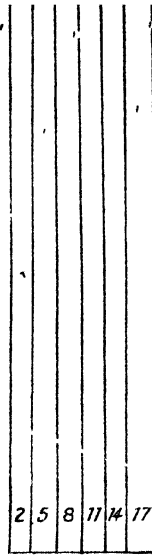


DIAGRAM 151

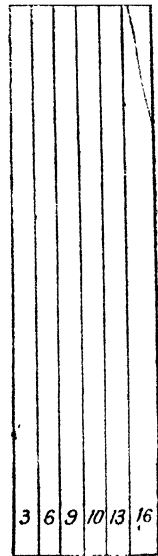


DIAGRAM 152

are then worked into an article and dropped if necessary, thus giving the stranded effect. More strips can be made to secure a better offset, the principles of the diagram being followed in every detail.

Many racoons possess a yellow head, which should be removed as shown in diagram 153. Care should be exercised in removing the same quantity from each side.

RACCOON

Diagram 154 gives a method of lengthening a racoon skin. The corners are forfeited in each case. The first cut commences at a distance from the centre and extends to the required width of the finished article. It is indicated in diagram 154. This method may be reversed.

An economical method of working racoons is to make the collar of a garment with the hair running down. As the neck of the skin is smaller, the cutter is able to nip the undesirable yellow part out, thus forming a clear collar, as shown in illustration, diagram 153.

A method, as described, of obtaining two racoon skins from one and satisfactorily used for collars will be found most useful.

The skin is cut into 12 strips, cuts being made extending from side to side across the skin numbering 1 at rump and 12 at the head.

Number one skin is comprised of 1, 3, 5, 7, 9, 11; number two of 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12. If the skin is particularly large 16 strips would give a better result.

The paws of the skin are cut away.

Diagram No. 42 of opossum, page 124, illustrates a method of obtaining a one-skin collar. It will be noticed that as much of the head of the skin as possible

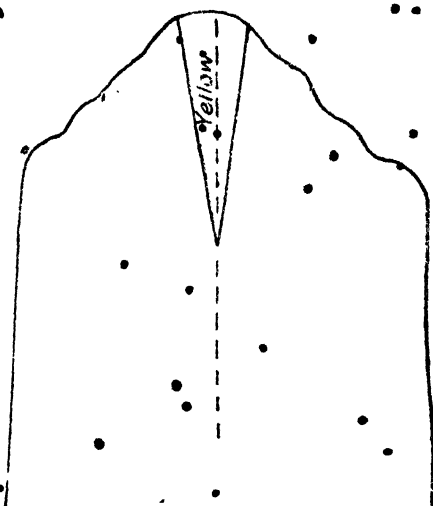


DIAGRAM 153

FURS AND FURRIERY

is used, the additional length on the outside of the collar being obtained by a series of cuts given in diagram.

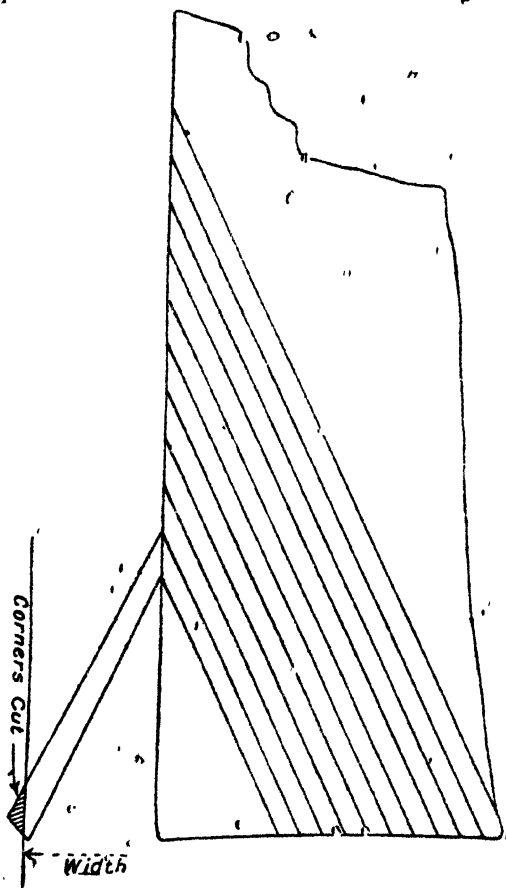


DIAGRAM 154

In closing the back seam of the collar, it is advisable to use three seams in order to congregate a number of hairs at that part so that the ground is well covered. The dovetail seams can be used with

RACCOON

good results for joining the heads and is explained in the skunk article, page 138.

Nailing. In nailing racoons the nailer should bear in mind that the appearance of the article is improved if he errs on the side of length and not breadth. . .

The centre of the skin should be kept perfectly straight, and the skin pulled from all quarters excepting the sides. .

All other points in nailing are in general similar to other skins, and can be found on page 58, NAILING.

CHAPTER 'XL'

CAT SKINS

French : *Chat*. German : *Katze*.

Natural History.

THE fur of cats has not been very popular in this country, but during the period of the war when furs were rather scarce, cat skins gained in popularity. They are found nearly all over the world, and are often described as genet. Huge quantities are offered for sale in the fairs, and are extensively used by poorer people for fur garments in countries which have severe winters.

Amongst the various types of cats used are the following: the Common Cat, the Desert Cat, the Mountain Cat, the Spotted Cat and the Tiger Cat; lastly we have the Civet Cat.

The Common Cat, which is about 2 ft. in length and light brown in colour, is very often marked with rings or spots. It is found in the Hudson Bay districts, California and New York State, and is further known by the name of "Bay Lynx."

The Desert Cat, measuring about 30 in. long, inhabits India. Its colour is light brown with spotted black marks.

The Mountain Cat makes its home in the Western and Southern parts of the United States. It is greyish in colour, shading lighter towards the belly. It is 12 to 18 in. in length.

The Spotted Cat, which is also termed the Native Cat, measures about 10 in. in length. It is in colour

CAT SKINS

a mixture of yellow and grey, conspicuously marked with white spots. This specimen comes from Australia.

The Tiger Cat has a yellowish-brown coat with long, narrow stripes running down the back, whilst on each side of the animal there are spots, making the skin in general appear very pretty. It resembles the skin of a tiger to a very great extent. It is a rather large-sized animal.

The Civet Cat is small in size and has a black skin with very conspicuous white markings. It is found in South America, and was for a period very fashionable in this country for trimmings.

Practical Working

The uses to which cat skins are put are the following.

Those which are prettily marked are made into outside coats, whilst others are used for inside linings. They are also employed in the manufacture of muffs and ties.

No elaborate work of any description should be put into the working of cat skins. The simplest cuts used give the best results. As will be seen in diagram 155, the rump should be hollowed and the head scalloped, which will enable one to be inserted into the other. In the making of articles or garments from skins with obvious markings, care should be exercised that these are not distorted in the stretching.

In order to prevent this occurring, the centre of the skin should be marked, and any stretching should take place on either side.

Diagram 155 also shows that the paws and parts immediately above are useless for work, being too poor in quality. A further objectionable place is found below the front paws. The remedy for this is also given in diagrams 155 and 156.

Diagram 156 would be the method adopted when it

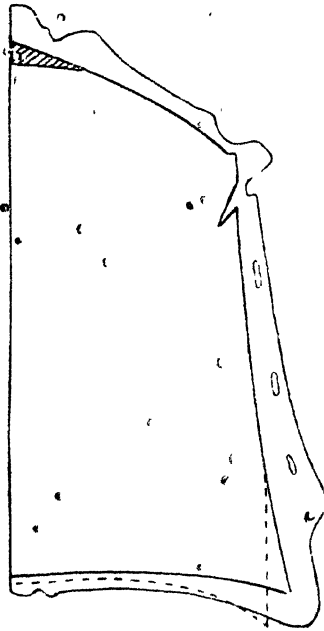


DIAGRAM 155

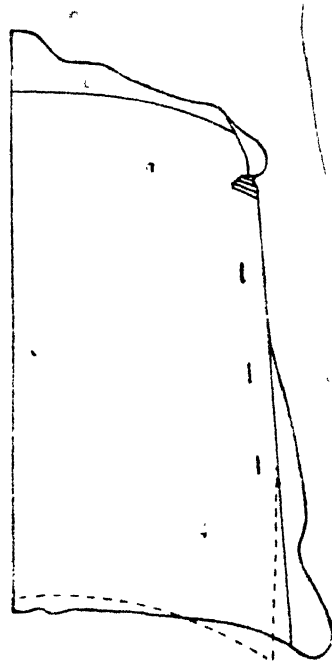


DIAGRAM 156

is desired to avail oneself of as much as possible of the skin. It will be noticed that the teats are sewn to enable the skin to be used beyond that point. In the working of the Civet Cat it would be a great protection against displacing the markings if cross lines, two or more, were drawn across the skin. The nailer could then view the position of the marks on the leather side. (Nailing, see General Points, page 58.)

CHAPTER XLI

SQUIRREL

French : *Ecureuil*. German : *Fehrückhen*.

Natural History

THE squirrel is about 8 to 9 in. in length, excluding the tail, which is about 8 in. long, being very bushy and of exceptional length as compared with the body.

The animal is found in most parts of the world being plentiful in Siberia, Russia and England, as well as on the Continent and in Asia.

Those mostly used by furriers emanate from Russia and the Continent.

The diet of the squirrel consists of nuts, acorns, etc., its long tail enabling it to climb with ease from one branch of a tree to another.

The Russian and Siberian types of squirrel are larger than the Swedish and most other kinds. The former types are also much better furred on account of the atmosphere in which they live. Nature has on this account presented the animal with a heavier coat.

The Russian skins are of a very dark shade of blue, those from the American Continent being much lighter in colour.

From Eastern Siberia is obtained a beautiful grade of skin known as the Saccamina type. The very finest class of squirrel, however, is found in Yakutsk. Another fine grade, known as the Lensky type, which, however, is inferior in quality and colour, is also found in Siberia. The Yenniseisky squirrels are lighter in colour and are found in very huge quantities.

These are classified into various grades, the classification depending upon quality and colour.

The Obskey squirrel is a further type. The Beisky is a squirrel found in large quantities. It is rather good in quality but small in size. In all, ten million squirrels are obtained from Russia annually, and are exported to the various markets of the world, China importing large quantities.

The animal is of partly hibernating nature and a cold winter attracts it to hollows in the trunks of trees for its winter sleep. This, however, has an injurious effect upon the coat of the squirrel. It feeds upon the store of food which it has accumulated during the warmer months.

One of the outstanding features of the animal is its beautiful large bushy tail. This serves two purposes. In the first place, it is of great assistance in climbing trees. It also helps to keep the squirrel warm during its long sleep.

The animals are trapped or caught at the beginning of the winter season, at which period their coat is at its best. It is at that period that they collect pieces of sticks and leaves with which to line their resting-places.

The Russians dress a good many of the skins found there, often sewing them into linings. These come on to the market as squirrel back and squirrel lock linings, the lock, of course, being the bellies of the animals.

The tails make splendid artists' brushes.

Practical Working

In describing the different methods used in the manufacture of squirrel coats, muffs and ties, it is

SQUIRREL

necessary to divide the working of this skin into two distinct classes. In the first instance, we have the squirrel article which is produced at what is generally known as a popular priced competitive line, as prices are very keenly cut in the manufactured state. In working for this particular class of trade, a method must be adopted whereby one is able to manufacture at a speed, at the same time studying regularity and perfection in every possible form.

Let us suppose 300 skins are handed to the cutter for the purpose of making a number of 16-skin ties. His duty from the outset should be to leave himself with very few skins over, and in order to do this the matching of the skins must first be gone into. The 300 skins are matched into 150 pairs, which have to be paired as regards texture, ground, surface and, lastly, size. It will then be found easier to match 75 pairs with another 75 pairs, thus enabling the cutter to deal with 75 fours, each four being alike in every detail. The first four skins which are the same in size, should be worked at the bottom of the article. As the fours are smaller but of the same colour, they should take their place above the lower four, so that when the 16 skins which form the tie are matched, the lower four are the longer and the skins become smaller as they reach the top of the article. This process should be used both when the skins are to be worked with the belly (which is the lock) and when the backs are being used alone.

- The above method will be found to be the most speedy, and at the same time will work as nearly as possible the whole of the skins into the various articles, without leaving a number of oddments.

FURS AND FURRIERY

We will now deal with the next process in the working of a 16-skin tie. A piece of carbon paper should be placed on the table, the skin then split along the middle of the belly and laid across the carbon sheet, leather downwards. An impression down the centre of the back of the squirrel as well as down the sides will enable one to mark the exact

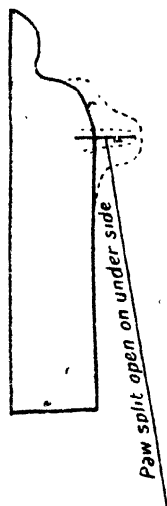


DIAGRAM 157

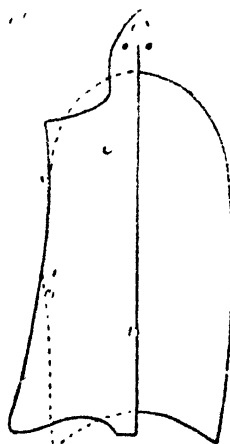


DIAGRAM 158

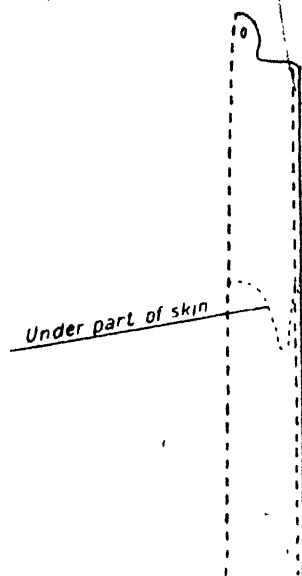


DIAGRAM 159

position of the centre and sides of the skin on the leather side.

Below will be found a diagram of two methods of removing the front paws of the squirrel. No. 157 diagram is preferable, as it enables one to obtain the fullest extent of width at the head of the skin where it is mostly required. It also permits as much as possible of the grey to be used, the part which is

SQUIRREL

removed being the flat piece of flank which in any case could not be utilised. The head should be cut round as diagram 158 while the rumps (see diagram 158) will be inserted into the head of the underneath skin. Care should then be taken that the carbon marks on the leather side of the skin in each case run opposite. This will satisfy one that the stripe on the hair side is straight. The belly of the skin should then be sewn together and the article is ready for nailing. Below is described a more economical method of obtaining the greatest possible size from skins, this will give us on completion, however, not so clean an article (see diagram 159).

The skin is split through the belly, rounded off at the head, the underneath of the skin at the head being likewise rounded (as per diagram). The rump of the skin is hollowed, the extreme paws are pulled to their greatest extent, and it will be found that the belly of the skin at each side of the paw runs shorter, which will make room for the higher part of the belly at the head of the skin. This is clearly demonstrated in diagram 159 (dotted line signifying belly on diagram).

• We will next treat with the better class of squirrel which can be worked in exactly the same way, excepting that more attention should be given to clearing sufficient of the bad material that may appear, either method as diagram 157 or 158 being used. Principles of diagram 159 would not be used, as the method is one for obtaining exceptional size. It is necessary • that sufficient of the flat head should be removed whilst the tuft of hair at the rump should remain, thus contributing to the beauty of the article.

• If paws are to be inserted into an article, a

FURS AND FURRIERY

vertical slit should be made, the paws being pushed through from the leather side. In moving skins in the length a cut may be used described below. After stretching skins, cut 1 in. below head to a point $\frac{1}{2}$ in. from the side in a downward fashion. One should only resort to elaborate cuts when absolutely necessary.

Diagram 160, gives a method of placing together squirrel backs, which are often placed on the market after the bellies have been removed.

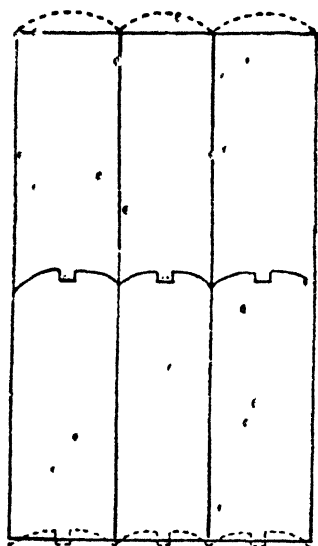


DIAGRAM 160

In working a coat of squirrel backs, all the backs should be matched in pairs and then one pair with another, ultimately obtaining a considerable number of skins which harmonise. Should one, however, find a slight difference in the shading of the skins, there is no alternative but to work the slightly different shades into the same coat.

Care should be exercised that the darker shade forms part of the back, and the lighter shade carried on until the extreme fronts are reached. Naturally the best results will be obtained in the making of a squirrel coat if all the backs are of exactly the same colour. The largest skins are worked to the bottom of the coat, being stretched in the width, whilst at the top of the garment, which is usually narrower, the skins are not stretched to so great an extent, resulting in the possible continuation of the seams over the whole length

SQUIRREL

of the coat. The aim of the worker is to make each skin stand out separately. Regularity, therefore, should be studied and skins should be kept in their correct positions.

The tuft of the tail of the back is often left on in the process of the work. This point is purely a question of one's instructions.

The joining seams at the sides of each skin should be made evenly, also seams running across the coat should regularly extend to the seams in one continuous line. In the event of two skins appearing to match in the first instance, but on further examination it is found that one skin possesses a little fuller side than the other, remove a little more of the flatter side. This will bring it to the level of the fuller skin and thus ensure a good seam.

This procedure should be carried out throughout the coat, taking care that the prominent parts of the garment consist of the choicest skins. Each back should be treated in the manner indicated in diagram 158.

We next treat with what are termed "Linings," the bulk of which are imported from Russia. They are placed together for the purpose of obtaining a great quantity of well-matched skins. All cross seams should be opened in order that each skin be opposite the other, which is not the case in the lining state. The centre of the row should be marked, and care should be taken that the flatter skins which very often figure in the lining should be removed and placed in a less noticeable part of the article or garment.

- Two linings are handed to the cutter for the purpose

FURS AND FURRIERY

of making a garment, these having been carefully matched beforehand. The best portions of both linings are chosen for working into back, collar and sleeves, whilst the poorer material is used for the remaining parts of the coat.

It will be noticed that the skins are often badly matched for colour and size. This should be regulated before work is commenced.

Nailing.—The nailing of squirrels requires care, inasmuch as the nails or pins should be placed at the extreme edge. They should be well fastened before being pulled and all seams should be perfectly straight. Any irregular seams show clearly when the article is finished. Straightness of both cross and upright seams is therefore an important point.

Nailing should be done with and not against the hair. This is especially important in pulling double fur ties on blocks; they should be pulled with and not against the hair, for, in the latter case, the hair would drag and not enable one to get the same amount of stretch from the article. This principle should also be studied in the nailing of all squirrel articles. Pincers should not be used more than is absolutely necessary, as the hair of a certain type of squirrel can easily be pulled out by careless use of these implements. This would leave a damage which is not easy to remedy. Drying should be effected by natural heat, although many articles made of Russian-dressed material need artificial heat to a small extent, the leather being damp to the touch.

The article should be beaten, set the right way of the hair, and in all cases be kept clean and free from chalk.

CHAPTER XLII

• LYNX

French : *Lynx*. German : *Luchs*.

Natural History

THERE are various types of lynx. The animal known as the Siberian or Persian Lynx is a little over 3 ft. in length, pale yellow in colour, with pronounced markings on the coat. It is found in Siberia, Persia, etc. This particular type is not very popular in this country. Another variety known as the Bay Lynx is very scarce. This animal inhabits America and California. Some are red in colour and marked with circular rings. It is a little over 26 in. in length. We next have the American Lynx which is found in the Northern parts of America and Canada, also in the Hudson Bay districts.

This type possesses a well-covered skin, varying from a dark brown to a paler shade. It is about 3½ to 4 ft. in length and is covered with long silvery hairs. The underground is of a darker shade. The tail is insignificant for the size of the animal. The belly of the skin is of a very good quality. The animal feeds, according to naturalists, on hares. It is a good swimmer and breeds once a year, having a litter of two. It is popular on the Continent and is dyed in all shades.

They are classified in their respective classes, 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th and 5th, as other skins, and offered for sale under the hammer.

FURS AND FURRIERY

Practical Working

The lynx, which is not very popular, nor in common use in this country, is large in size, which enables one to procure a set of furs from one skin.

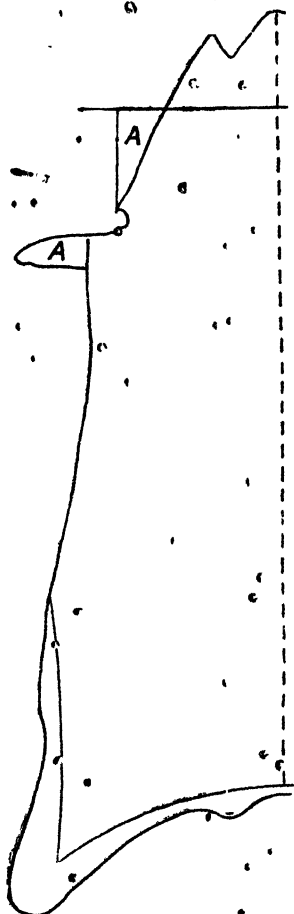


DIAGRAM 161

Although all parts of the skin, including the paws, may be used, certain differences in the hair often occur, which must be taken into consideration. To deal with this skin in the best manner, we shall endeavour to describe a method of obtaining a flat surface as well as squareness, in which state it can be used for any article required. When the objectionable parts under the front paws are removed, as shown in diagram, as well as the poor parts at the teats of the skin, it will be noticed that the good sides, previously mentioned can be joined side to side if necessary. The portion of the skin marked A, indicated in diagram, can be sewn to the side of head or rump to widen same.

Diagram 161 shows that in the working of this particular skin careful manipulation is required. When markings are very few and some distance from one another, avoid many cuts, as any form of elaborate

LYNX

work is liable to displace markings. Many skins are most profusely marked with spots, in which case one may with confidence work more elaborately. Two articles can be obtained from one lynx skin by cutting into strips in an upright fashion. The skin is cut into 28 strips, cuts extending from head to rump. Odd numbers are placed into one skin, even numbers into the other. The result when complete is first skin numbers: 28, 26, 24, 22, 20, 18, 16, 14, 12, 10, 8, 6, 4, 2; second skin: 27, 25, 23, 21, 19, 17, 15, 13, 11, 9, 7, 5, 3, 1. Strips are sewn together in this formation and comprise two skins. One may work skins to the required pattern after carrying out this operation. In the case of markings being still more profuse, strips should be cut on the same principle but from side to side.

Three seams are used for the joining of heads, which will prevent the ground of the skin showing. If extra material is needed, the front paws may be utilised, as previously stated.

Nailing.—Care should be taken in the nailing of this skin that the markings are not displaced. With regard to all other points please refer to NAILING, page 58.

CHAPTER XLIII

FISHER

French : *Pican*. German : *Virginia Iltis*.

Natural History.

THE fisher is a member of the marten family, measuring between 2 and 3 ft. in length, with a fine tail of about 15 inches.

It has also the additional names of the pekan and black cat. It is found in Canada as well as parts of the United States. In colour, it runs from a light to a very dark shade of brown, being lightest at the head and darkest at the rump. The tail is extremely dark, almost black, and is often used alone for trimming.

It makes its home in mountainous districts and damp places. The hair is very thickly furred. This is especially the case in animals coming from Canada. The undergrowth of the hair is very close, although the pile in itself is not so high as that possessed by other members of the marten family. The pelt is very strong, and of an elastic nature.

Its food consists of mice, frogs, etc.

The animal breeds annually, having about three young at the time.

A poorer type of fisher, lighter in colour and smaller, is found in Northern India, while a number is obtained from the Pacific coast. Exceptionally fine specimens are caught in the Moose River districts.

The animal is extremely long and narrow in appearance.

FISHER

The price of fisher varies a great deal, depending upon the fashion. When in demand, the price soars high, but when out of favour, it falls considerably. It is used for muffs, ties and trimmings. When on a garment it has a very rich effect.

In handling the fisher for the purpose of selling in the raw state, the following grades are defined—

1st Ex. Large.	1st Quality.
2nd „	2nd „
3rd „	3rd „

Classification is made as in other skins, with special grade for pale skins, and often a combination of dark and pale termed Pt. Pale.

Practical Working

The fisher, having a high and close pile, one is able to work on the skin to advantage without fear of seams showing. The general principles of sables, page 68, are applicable in the working of fisher skins. All seams made in this particular skin should be very fine. The skin should be carefully opened down the centre of the belly and slightly damped and stretched flat. Diagram 162 describes a method of removing the front paws. The centre of the skin should be carefully marked as indicated. The tail and hind paws should not be removed if they are required on the article when completed.

Most of the fishers used to-day are worked in the animal shape. Diagram 162 illustrates the method of working this particular shape. The fewest cuts possible should be used to obtain the results required. The skin lends itself to stretching very well

FURS AND FURRIERY

and this should assist in obtaining the necessary effect with fewer cuts than would otherwise be the case.

If the skin is required very much longer, necessitating drops in the length, one should bear in mind the changes in the colour of the hair. The reason why this point should not be lost sight of is because any cut made in the length to too great an extent is likely to mix the lighter with the darker shades of hair.

The cut which is very often needed in this skin is one giving roundness to the collar. This is obtained by a cut releasing the outside of the collar, and permits stretching. Cut should be, say 3 in. long, and run in direction of hair. The bad part under the tail should be removed, as is shown in diagram.

If a little extra length is required in the fisher, one may use the cut also shown in diagram 162, which has the advantage of giving added length, at the same time removing the undesired part at the rump of the skin previously mentioned. The cut should be effected in a rounded fashion commencing at the side of the skin, where the change in texture

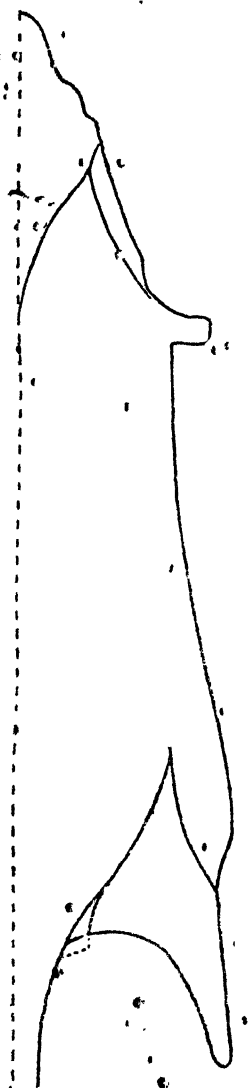


DIAGRAM 162

FISHER

and colour takes place. By this means the side is dropped independently. Extreme caution should be exercised in the working of fishers so far as the sides are concerned, even more so than in the case of most other skins.

The head of a fisher is often required very much wider. Diagram 162 shows how the added width at the head may be obtained. The cut shown is one which enables the side to be dropped independently.

Any stretch required in the width of a fisher skin will be easily obtained, the skin having been dressed in the length in the first instance. Damages which occur in the skin should be removed with the simplest cuts possible. The extreme sides of the skin which are poor, should also be removed, and in the completion of the article the sides remaining should run regularly down the skin. The same quantity of side should be left on each side of the article.

Nailing.—The principles of nailing so far as the fisher is concerned are very similar to those followed in the case of the better furs.

The head which is usually required to be mounted, should be kept soft during the process of nailing by the insertion of a piece of wet wool. The paws of the skin should be nailed out flat and the tail fixed in position. The centre of the skin should be kept perfectly in the middle and the sides pulled as little as possible. Cleanliness should, of course, be carefully studied as in the nailing of other skins.

For further information with regard to the nailing of fisher skins, the reader should refer to the nailing of foxes, page 217.

CHAPTER XLIV

ASTRAKHAN

French : *Astrakan*. Ge'iman : *Astracan*.

Natural History

THE astrakhan or merlaschka, which is a member of the lamb family and comes from Russia, takes its name from the place in which it is found, namely, Muraschkino. It resembles the Persian in appearance excepting that it is much inferior and is often confused with the poorer types of Persian. The distinct difference between the Persian and the Astrakhan is that the curl is looser, commoner and generally inferior in appearance in the latter case.

The skins take the dye very well. The place best noted for good results in this respect is Germany. The waters in Germany are very suitable for astrakhan skin, as a result it is endowed with a fine lustre.

In their natural state the skins are white, brown, mottled and black.

The skins are forwarded to the fairs by Russian and Persian merchants, either in the raw state or when dressed, the dressing being done in Kasan and Moscow where they are centrally collected.

Practical Working

Astrakhan skins resemble Persians to a great extent, but can easily be detected by experienced persons as they are much inferior in quality and looser in curl.

This skin is chiefly used in the making of coats,

ASTRAKHAN

and therefore too much emphasis cannot be put on the importance of working to measure.

About 36 skins will be needed to form an astrakhan coat. These should be carefully matched in the first place, and care taken that those with varying curls are apportioned to different parts of the garment. The finest specimens should go to form the back of the coat. The next in quality should comprise the revers and sleeves; and again, those for the under-sleeves and under-collar, as well as for a pair of fronts, should be laid aside. Those skins, however, which are set aside for the under-collar and under-sleeves should not be of too poor a quality, as they have the effect of spoiling the garment if such is the case.

The head of the astrakhan skin possesses large coarse curls. This coarseness, however, gives place to much finer curls as the rump of the skin is reached, the latter being too poor to use. The curls, however, at the sides are found to be much coarser than those in the middle of the skin.

As in the case of the Persian, the curls wind in the direction of the head.

The finest skins will form the centre of the back. The remainder which are set aside for this part of the coat should be placed on either side of the back, care being taken that they balance evenly. Skins should be split and joined side to centre as diagram. The smaller skins will form the top. At the nape of the neck the two uppermost skins should be joined rump to rump, whilst the head of the third skin should be joined to the head of the skin immediately below. Diagram 163 shows how this should be effected. An irregular seam should be used when joining the rumps

FURS AND FURRIERY

of the uppermost skins together, the object of this being to make a perfect seam, as this is one of the most prominent parts of the garment.

Diagram 163 further shows how the remainder of the skins should be split and placed to complete the back

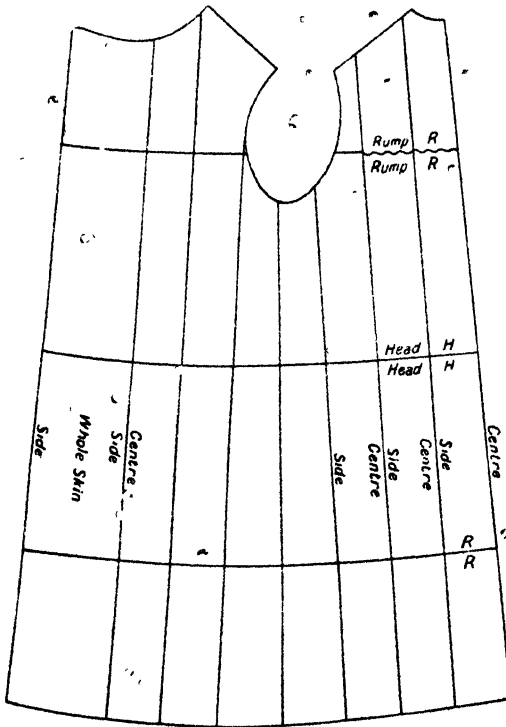


DIAGRAM 163

of the coat. Irregular seams should be employed and two poor sides should not be adjacent, as this would tend to localise the poorness in quality. A similar method is adopted so far as the heads and rumps are concerned. They are joined by a straight seam after removing a portion of the head which is

ĀSTRĀKHAN

loose, and part of the rump which is not suitable to be worked. Skins should be straightened before being placed together.

The centres join the sides, thus ensuring equality on either side of the back. In this way the weaker sides of the skin are halved as already mentioned. The illustration shows that when the skins have been split, half of each skin is placed on either side of the centre of the back. Each skin is treated in a similar manner.

One is sewn to the other, the head joining the head, whilst the rumps join in the prominent portion of the back. In working the garment in this manner, irregularity over the whole will be introduced.

The skins at the extreme front of the coat are left whole, the remainder being split. Half of each skin is placed in each half of the coat. Although straight seams are given in diagram, many workers prefer the method given in broadtail, page 245, diagram No. 132.

With regard to the sleeves, rump to rump should be worked at the elbow. These skins should not be split, and prominent parts should be covered with the best material. This also applies to the collar and cuffs.

With reference to cleaning and general points in nailing and finishing, etc. see PERSIAN.

CHAPTER 'XLV

PONY

Natural History

THE bulk of pony skins used in the trade comes from Russia. The animals are rather numerous in certain parts of the country and run wild. The skin of greatest value used by the furrier is that obtained from the new-born pony. From the furrier's point of view pony skins must be divided into three distinct classes irrespective of the difference in quality in each class. Firstly, the large coarse pony, which is assumed to be an overgrown animal, is about $4\frac{1}{2}$ ft. long. The pelt is very thick and is of very little use to the furrier. The medium pony is that which is mostly used in the trade. It varies from a straight-piled skin to one with a beautiful pattern and design. The value of a pony depends upon the marking, those with water markings fetching the best price.

Lastly, we have the small pony which measures about 18 in. in length. This type is covered with very little hair and resembles the broadtail. The value of such a skin would depend upon its water markings, which are very similar to moiré silk, the best specimens being unblemished. —

The part of the skin at the haunches is prettily marked.

The size of the mane depends upon the age of the animal. Ponies of a rich, dark-brown shade are worked in the natural state, whereas others are usually dyed black, this work being done very successfully.

PONY

Practical Working

The purpose to which pony skins are principally put is for the manufacture of ladies' garments.

To deal satisfactorily with all points in the working of pony, it is necessary to divide same into two classes; those which are covered with hair to a moderate degree and those of the broadtail type.

With regard to the former kind, the average skin is some 3 ft. in length. The hairs run evenly from the extreme head of the skin to the rump. Those hairs, however, on a level with the front paws have a tendency to flow to the sides (see arrows on diagram 164).

The mane of the skin should be treated in the following manner. It should be clipped, if the leather of the ground of the skin is soft; otherwise it must be removed by means of a cut. It will also be found necessary to remove the extreme sides of the skin.

Diagram 164 describes a method of forming a pony skin coat. It is pointed out that the flowered design of the skin is thrown to the prominent parts of the garment.

Eight skins would be required for the manufacture of such a coat. These should be carefully matched for colour, design and texture. Of the skins selected the choicest two are reserved for the sleeves, collar and cuffs.

As shown in diagram 164, the back will consist of one whole skin, with the addition of half of skin marked A which is joined to the rump. The other half-skin is joined to the head. The portion marked A, placed at the top of the coat, should if possible be placed under the collar. In order to do this, B skin should, if possible, be larger.

FURS AND FURRIERY

In splitting skin A, a portion should be selected about $\frac{1}{2}$ in. above the design in order to obtain regular intervals between the markings. The same method of joining the skins is applied to the fronts of the coat, D and C skins remaining whole, whilst E and F skins are split. The rump of the skin in each case

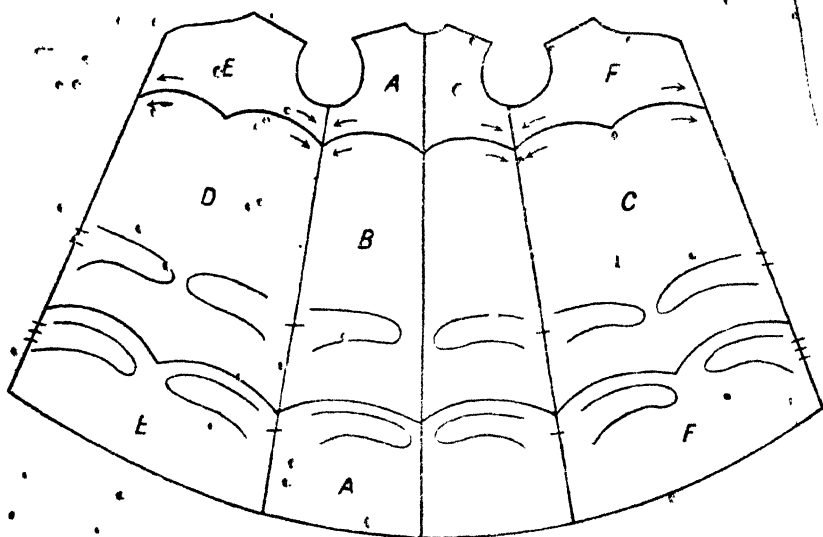


DIAGRAM 164

is hollowed, as illustrated, forming an irregular seam which considerably reduces the possibility of its showing. Many workers prefer the method of scalloping the cross cut, instead of the arched effect. It is thought that a wavy line will further minimise the possibility of seams showing. The skin should be marked down the centre, the design evenly placed, and the differences in hair and seams maintained in the fronts and back. As few seams as possible should be made, and any damages in the skin removed by the simplest

PONY

cuts. The flowered design should be thrown forward in the making of the sleeves, collar and cuffs. If too large a collar is not needed one is often able to obtain a pair of sleeves and collar from two skins, three-quarters of a skin being used for one sleeve and quarter of a skin for half the collar. Care must be taken that the markings in both cases are prominently placed. In all cases fine seams should be employed.

An undesirable part is always encountered in the pony skin towards the sides on a level with the haunches. This part is practically devoid of hair and should be removed.

When sufficient of the sides can be removed to clear this portion, the difficulty is at once overcome. If this cannot be done, the paw of the skin should be placed in correct position with the flow of the hair, thus covering the shortage quite successfully. Sewing whenever possible should be done by hand, as however carefully executed, machined seams show.

In working the broadtail type of pony the same lines of irregularity should be studied, whilst to further minimise the possibilities of seams showing, they should be done by hand. The reason for this is that the skin possesses very little hair.

The flatter type of pony is more satisfactorily worked if a coat with a yoke or flounce is required. In that case joining seams can be hidden in folds, which are made for the purpose of producing the effect required.

Nailing.—The nailer will find that the pony skin garment is very strong in the pelt. If dressed and dyed on the Continent it possesses a white leather, and when damped well with warm water it will stretch

FURS AND FURRIERY

easily. The centre marking of the skin should be carefully kept in position, otherwise the flowered design would be displaced. In this case the garment would appear one-sided. The skin is best nailed in one piece, and this should be done whenever possible.

Cuts with gores should be avoided in pony, as the seams made in same are likely to show considerably.

The skins should not be dried by the fire, but allowed to do so naturally. Setting, beating and combing are quite unnecessary.

In the nailing of the broadtail type greater care should be taken as the pelt is much thinner. It should be treated gingerly in the same manner as the broadtail.

All other points in nailing will be found under the heading of NAILING, page 58.

MOUFLONS OR LLAMAS

French : *Lama*.

Natural History

This animal comes from Peru and adjoining parts and is a species of goat. In colour they are white, yellow, mottled and brown. The whiter types are used in their natural state, whilst the discoloured skins are dyed grey or brown. The animal is some 3 to 4 ft. in length. The younger animal has a silky coat, whilst the older possesses a rough and shaggy one. It is classified amongst the very cheap furs, for it possesses no durability in the coat.

Practical Working

In the working of mouflons one must apply the

THIBET

general principles of working the ordinary goat skin. The pile will be found to be of a thin and loose type which easily becomes ragged. The free use of the comb as well as the iron will tend to give very good results. Manipulation is the outstanding feature in the working of this skin. In working, no cuts are used other than the ordinary simple ones.

THIBET

Natural History

The thibet which is a popular fur amongst the cheaper class, is about $2\frac{1}{2}$ ft. in length. It is curly in appearance and is used principally for the manufacture of sets for children. It is found in Asia, and is a species of goat. It is obtained in the form of plates as well as in separate skins.

Practical Working

The working of this skin is simple, as it lends itself to piecing thereby making any complicated work unnecessary.

- The general principles of working this skin are the same as those applied to goats. The curl of a thibet is often not required. In order to straighten a thibet skin, the free use of the comb and iron will have the desired effect. The broad principle in the working of this skin is manipulation.

CHAPTER XLVI

WOLF

French : *Loup*. German : *Wolf*.

" *Natural History, Etc.*"

THERE are various types of wolf, the European wolf and the American wolf being the most important.

The European wolf which is found in Western Europe is extinct in the British Isles, but are still found in the forests and wooded parts of the Continent. Wolf-catchers have been employed for centuries to kill wolves who are a menace to farmers and their stock. It makes its appearance in severe weather, causing ravages to herds. It is hunted by wolfhounds held in check by hunters. The particular type of wolf which reaches us from Siberia is rather large in size and of a deeper, redder colour, very fierce and greatly feared by all in those parts.

The American wolf is a much larger animal, measuring some $5\frac{1}{2}$ ft. in length. It comes from Alaska and various parts of the United States. Certain of these skins are exceptionally silky and fine in quality.

Amongst the rarer types of wolf we find the Aard wolf, coming from South Africa. This animal is about $2\frac{1}{2}$ ft. long.

A larger wolf some 4 ft. long is known as the Indian wolf, taking its name from the place of its origin.

A wolf which is grey in colour inhabits South America and is about 24 in. in length.

Wolves inhabit Asia and best part of Europe, no country having so satisfactorily wiped out the animal

WOLF

as England. Past history proves that some countries derived annually a quantity of wolf heads as revenue, whilst bounties were always offered for the skulls of wolves. Scotland was last to eradicate the wolf in the British Isles. Up to the seventeenth century numbers still existed. Wolves are often trapped alive after being lured into a trap automatically controlled. The classification adopted in wolf skins by the brokers is the following—

1st Ex. Large.—Comprise the best quality and those which are extra large.

1st Pt. Ex. Large.—Skins of the best quality and containing a percentage of extra large.

1st.—Ordinary size of the best quality.

2nd Ex. Large.—Second in quality, size extra large.

2nd.—Skins of a second grade, ordinary size.

1st and 2nd Medium are skins of both quality 1 and 2, but medium in size.

3rd.—Poor skins, too poor to be placed in any of the classes above.

4th.—Poorer even than 3rd.

(Smalls are often defined under one class.)

Practical Working

The wolf may be divided into three classes so far as the practical work is concerned, namely, the large specimens in which manipulation plays an important part; the small wolf from which only one article can be made, and, lastly, the superfine specimen which resembles the fox so far as the quality is concerned.

With regard to the first type of wolf, manipulation of the skin will show what can be obtained therefrom.

FURS AND FURRIERY

Perhaps the cutter will get one muff and one tie, or half a muff and a tie, and so forth. In working on this particular method, it should always be borne in mind that the heads of wolves join together very satisfactorily. The parts of a wolf which show the best seams when completed should be noted in the planning of the various articles.

Although the wolf is sometimes worked in its natural state, the bulk is dyed black. The principles of work, however, are applicable in both cases. After the skin has been slightly damped and stretched flat, it should be marked down the centre. The undesirable piece under the tail should be cut away. Another objectionable portion appears above the hind paws. The method applied for the removal and filling in of this part depends entirely upon the size of the bareness and the height of the pile immediately around it. It is sometimes found possible to draw a tongue, thus lowering a portion of the fuller part to cover this defect (see diagram 99 of Fox, page 208). On the other hand, a piece of the upper part of the skin may be removed to fill the gap. The part referred to is on some occasions only very small. In such cases one is able to remove a small portion of the side above to the level of this defect. Again, in the very fine specimens, when the pile is good, dummy seams sewn at this part bring the hairs closer together making it as much like the remainder of the skin as possible. Diagram 98, page 207.

Cuts for the head of the wolf are very seldom needed, but diagram 165 gives a method of obtaining added width at the head. Both the middle and sides are lowered in order to obtain the additional width.

WOLF

Two methods of obtaining length are given in diagram 165. The straight cut has the advantage of both narrowing the rump and facilitating the removal of

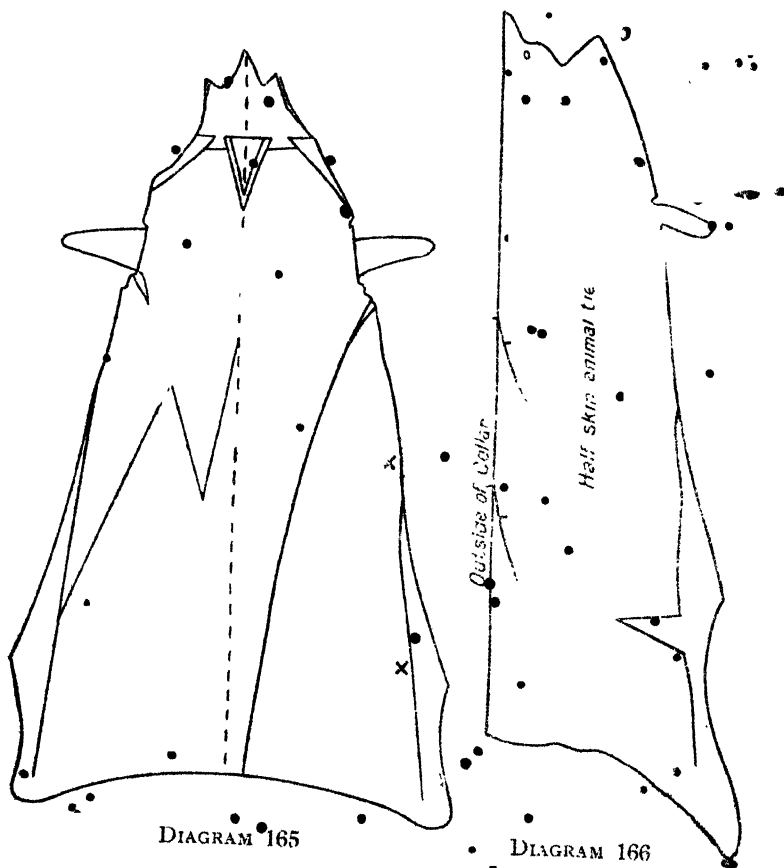


DIAGRAM 165

DIAGRAM 166

faulty pieces under the front paws. In working upon the alternate method of obtaining length, the first cut as in diagram should be as near the centre as possible, whilst all points should be on different levels in order to cause irregularity.

FURS AND FURRIERY

The last downward stroke of the cuts should end at the side. Beyond this point the side is dropped independently.

Diagram 166 gives a method of obtaining a half-skin animal. The skin is split down the middle. The defective part above the hind paw is removed as shown, having the two-fold advantage of giving shape to the skin at the same time solving the difficulty of its removal.

In making the article just mentioned, the paw which is short on the outside of the article must be carefully matched, the front paw being used for this purpose.

Care should be taken that the article when completed is soft. Other points on this subject can be found on page 206 (Foxes).

For Nailing, refer to Fox.

CHAPTER XLVII

HARES

French : *Lievre*. German : *Hase*.

Natural History

HARES are about 28 in. in length, and inhabit Russia, Siberia, Labrador and the surrounding districts, as well as Germany and other parts of Europe. Their ears are conspicuously black-tipped, the remainder of the skin being white; this is particularly noticed in those coming from Siberia, Russia, and the Arctic regions.

The tail is short and very white, and the feet have a collection of very thick fur to protect the animal from the rigours of the climate in which it lives.

The hare is usually trapped during the winter as then the coat is white. The summer coat is, however, quite grey, or brown, the under part of the animal being usually white.

The hare remains in the neighbourhood of its home being too timid to venture very far, and thus falls an easy prey to its chief enemy the fox.

The skins are dyed in the following shades: blue, grey, snowflake, black, etc., imitating foxes in all their colours, whilst in the case of the winter pure white skin, they are bleached to resemble the white fox.

Practical Working

Hares must be classed amongst the cheaper grades of furs and are usually worked by those who make a speciality of this article. In working this particular

FURS AND FURRIERY

skin both quickness and method must be taken into consideration.

The hare is often worked in the following manner. The underneath of the skin, thinner in the hair, is made into one class of article, whilst the back of the skin forms another class. The object of dividing the

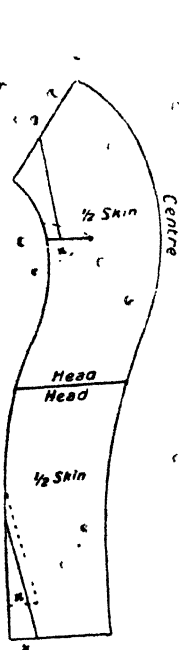


DIAGRAM 167

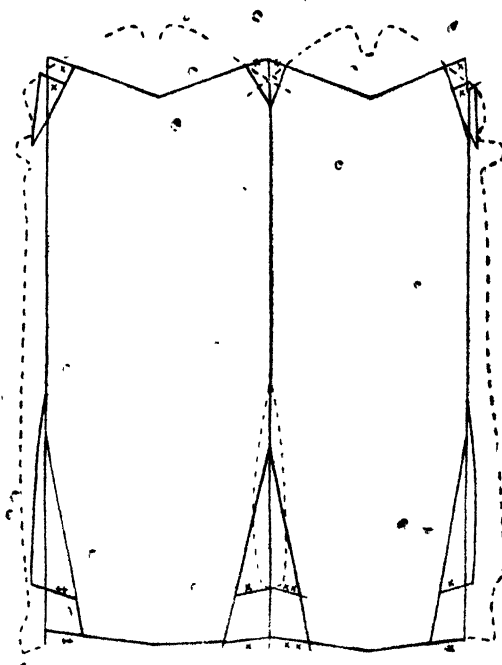


DIAGRAM 168

skin into two classes is that the underneath of the skin more closely resembles the fox than the back. Little if any elaborate work is ever put into the hare skin, the pelt being of a nature which does not permit this.

Diagram 167 shows the method of obtaining the collar effect, so popular in hares. It will be seen that a piece is removed to take the place of elaborate cuts

• HARES

marked \times on diagram. The side at the rump is lowered in order to remove the flatter portion at the extreme rump (side). The head of the lower skin is joined to the head of the first skin, thus making the cleanest joining seam. The effect is obtained from two hare skins split.

All complicated work should be avoided in this skin, as the cutter is dealing with an awkward leather which puckers very quickly.

The simplest cuts possible should always be used, and these should be clean and regular.

Diagram 168 describes a method of working a two-skin muff. It will be noticed that the objectionable flat sides at the rump are removed, and therefore need not be taken into consideration in the working.

The sides are let down as per diagram, squaring the skin and enabling the flatter rump to be removed. The head of the skin is cut in a manner which both utilises as much of the material as is good and permits the rump to be inserted in the closing seam.

In damping the skin the leather will be found to possess a peculiar nature inasmuch as it becomes very soft with no stretch.

With regard to all other matters referring to the working of this particular skin, the broad principles which apply to all other skins are applicable in this case.

For NAILING, see page 58.

CHAPTER XLVIII

WOLVERINE

French : *Glouton*. German : *Vielfrass*.

Natural History

THE wolverine is a very ferocious animal, and has the additional and suggestive name of the Glutton.

It measures some 3 ft. in length. It has a distinctive dark mark in the middle of the back, and the sides of the animal are of a lighter shade. It is thickly furred, with a very close underground.

The wolverine is found in Siberia, parts of Europe, and Canada.

The animal is disliked by the trappers, as its food consists of valuable furred animals such as beaver, etc., and it possesses an unappeasable appetite.

Practical Working

The wolverine is a skin which is often met with by the cutter. A few words on this particular animal will therefore no doubt be found useful.

The centre of the skin is very dark, the sides being lighter in hue.

The methods of working depend entirely upon the prevailing fashion. Some years ago when collars, flounces and trimmings were required for coats, the dark part of the skin was worked independently of the light. To-day, however, the skin is often worked as the whole animal, showing the light and dark shadings. When the whole skin effect is desired, the work is simple, the general principles of work being carried

WOLVERINE

out. Care must be taken that the part where change of colour exists should be regular, being exactly between an even side. In removing the dark centre to the lighter portion, the article is again worked on a simple basis. The centre of the skin is joined, if necessary, to the centre of another skin, from which an article can be fashioned. The cut edges from which the centre has been removed are then joined and a separate article made.

The undergrowth permits the use of taping, which gives us a bigger article. The principles of taping are given on page 209, and should be carried out only when sufficient hair exists to cover the underground.

Elaborate cutting should not be used for this skin. It should be borne in mind that cuts should be made with and not against the hair.

The inferior side should be removed, giving us a clean edge. Points that apply generally to other furs, also that of taping, are applicable. Due regard for the marking must be taken into consideration.

The general principles of nailing should be adhered to in this skin. Particulars of nailing are given on page 58.

CHAPTER XLVIII—(continued)

BADGER . . .

French : *Blaireau*. German : *Dachs*.

Natural History

BADGERS come in great quantities from Asia, and parts of America. They have not been used to any very great extent in this country in the past.

The animal is a mixed grey in colour and possesses large white and silvery hairs. Although one of the cheaper types, the skin is extremely durable.

In the parts where the badger is found, the flesh is considered a delicacy.

Practical Work

The cheapness and type of skin will easily be recognised as one in which elaborate work is unsuitable. Simplicity in cuts to obtain the desired effect is what is required. The subject of the making of a set in badger skins is illustrated in diagrams 169 and 170.

In diagram 170 a muff is obtained. It will be noticed that the centre of the skin is removed, also a good portion of the poor side, head and rump. Lower the portion of good head in order to work same in the muff, joining seams are lettered A and A. In the case of the tie (diagram 169), the skin is cut into pieces lettering 2 to 12 as illustration, and the other half in the same manner Nos. 1 to 10. No. 1 piece is followed by No. 2 and so forth, until a band is made which forms the article in question. All other points with regard to working are similar to that of other furs. The two diagrams Nos. 169 and 170 giving the principle of working.

CHAPTER XLIX

TAIL WORK

ALTHOUGH articles made from the tails of sable, mink, etc., are at the moment out of favour, it is quite conceivable that with the revolution of Fashion's wheel, these may be once again revived.

A few remarks and illustrations on this subject will therefore not be amiss. The uses to which tails were formerly put were for the manufacture of apparel varying from pelerines, muffs and ties to trimmings. The illustration overlay gives a method which should be used in placing six or more sable tails together in order to form a strip of trimming. The hair flows one way without the presence of any individual tail being detected except in the shades of colour. By following the points as illustrated in diagram 171, one will obtain that which appears to be a long tail.

For purposes of demonstration the tails are lettered A and D. It will be noticed that a tail is fullest at the tip, and at the same time narrower than the upper part.

The extreme point of each tail is removed, the narrowest part of the tail being split and tape inserted, which brings it to the width of the remainder of the tail. Tail A in diagram is cut into strips as illustrated, D remaining intact. By changing the place of A tail, which has been stripped as marked in diagram, a continuous flow of hair is obtained without any joins.

Strip 24 marked in the diagram will match the

TAIL WORK

same position of the next tail, whilst strip No. 1 matches the lower part of the tail. The position of the tail having been converted, a continuous flow of hair is obtained.

Combing should be freely resorted to.

Should an effective wrap be desired, tails may be satisfactorily worked in the chevron fashion, as in diagram 172. The illustration below depicts how the best results may be obtained. The tail being

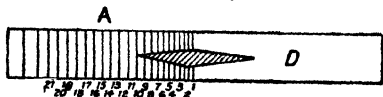


DIAGRAM 171 •

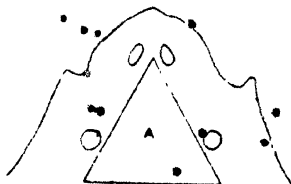


DIAGRAM 173

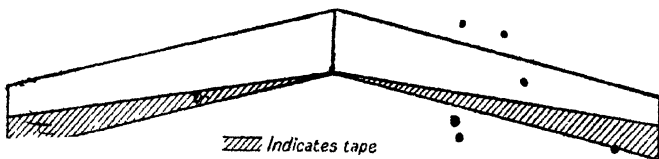


DIAGRAM 172

narrowest at the point, a piece of tape is run to the level of the wider part.

The top parts of the tails are then sewn together in the chevron fashion, being placed one on the other.

It is often advisable to nail the tail before working.

THE WORKING OF HEADS

In the fur trade it should be remembered that practically everything is utilised for one purpose or another, even heads are put to some use.

The diagram, No. 173, shows how the heads of

FURS AND FURRIERY

marten skins may be placed together in a satisfactory manner.

After having secured a "plate", made from a number of heads, as diagram, a number of plates are joined together to form the required article. Portions marked A which all come from the middle of the head are used, the sides being too discoloured and flat, compared with these. The portion should be removed in line with the eyes and ears, forming a triangular shape. The parts at each side of eyes and ears are worked independently. The

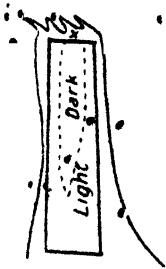
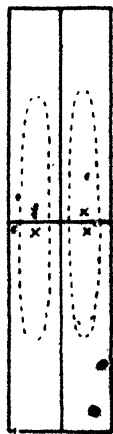


DIAGRAM 174

heads should be thoroughly softened and stretched, care being taken that the portions allotted for the article or garment are even, otherwise difficulty will be experienced in obtaining a flat surface.

WORKING OF PAWS

The illustrations Nos. 174 and 175 give the method of plating together paws of sable, stone marten and baum marten. It will be clearly seen that as much of the paw as possible is utilised. Dotted lines on diagrams indicate the shading in colour of the paws. Care must be taken that the joining seam is sewn evenly. The purpose for which paws are used is, for coat linings, the principle of diagram 175 being used throughout the making of the lining. In appearance the lining shades beautifully, as can be gauged from the appearance of the dotted lines indicated. It need hardly be



DIAG. 175

TWISTING OF TAILS

mentioned that the paws should be thoroughly damped with warm water, stretched, and the principle of diagram 174 carried out. The claw ends of the paws are joined together (marked with a cross on diagram).

• TWISTING OF TAILS •

The twisting of tails is a process which is put into operation when one wishes to obtain a number of tails from one tail. It has been practised with the tails of squirrels, wolves, foxes, etc. An industry for the production of tails of this description is in existence. The general principles of the manufacture of these twisted tails are carried out by means of a machine with two spindles. These spindles are found at each end of the machine and have a piece of string stretched between them.

The tail in question, which, for instance, might be a fox tail, is thoroughly damped and stretched to its utmost, after which it is cut into a number of strips, which should vary according to the pile of the skin. If the skin is of a very flat nature, the strips should be wider. If, on the other hand, the fox tail is of a very good quality, the width of the leather need not necessarily exceed $\frac{1}{8}$ in. The strip of fur need not essentially be part of a tail, a strip of another part of the skin being often used.

Each strip is twisted around the string, the edges of the leather coming close together in order that the string is not visible down the tail when it has been completed. The string in the first instance is covered with glue or some adhesive substance which at once sticks to the leather of the tail. The height of the

FURS AND FURRIERY

pile will cover any little irregularity which may occur at the leather of the skin. A short piece of string is allowed to extend at the ends of the tail for the purpose of fastening.

As already mentioned, this procedure is carried out in numerous furs. The particular instance given above shows how many tails may be strung to the best advantage from one fox tail of superior quality.

CHAPTER. I.

POINTING OF FURS

THE pointing of furs is out of date at the present day, but since the fashion may change, a few words on this subject may possibly be of some use in the future.

The object of pointing, which was at one time carried out extensively in foxes, was to make them resemble the silver fox.

This process was also practised on hares and other skins of a similar appearance to that of the fox.

The hairs used were those of the badger, and the method adopted was to place long white hairs between those of a black or smoked colour in order to obtain the necessary effect.

The hairs to be inserted were cut down according to the level of the pile of the skin under treatment, and the badger hairs, after being dipped in glue, were stuck to the leather of the skin with the aid of pliers.

After the right spots had been determined, the hairs of the skin were parted so that the badger hairs might be placed in the correct position.

This procedure was repeated on the greater part of the skin, so that the desired effect might be obtained. Two or three badger hairs were placed side by side in the same spot to obtain a more natural result. The article was then allowed to dry.

MOUNTING OF HEADS

The mounting of heads which is really the work of taxidermists more than that of furriers, is, however,

FURS AND FURRIERY

carried out to a great extent by the latter. In the larger articles, however, such as rugs, etc., the work is of such a complicated nature that it needs the skill and training of the taxidermist to carry it out successfully.

To mount a head well one needs to study expression to a great extent, as a twist or pressure on a certain part of the head will turn a most ferocious looking animal into quite a tame one or vice versa.

Heads which are mounted may be divided into three distinct classes, viz., those which are "blocked"—usually termed "soft heads"—skull heads and those suitable for mounting of rugs, as referred to above.

With regard to blocked heads, these are impressed to the shape of the skull and afterwards stuffed with paper for preference which, on being damped, becomes more or less papier maché. If the paper stuffing makes the skull too hard, it may be filled in the same manner with wadding. The block used is the shape of the head and has dents for the eyes as well as for the position of the ears. To demonstrate how such a head may be successfully blocked, the fox head will serve as a good example.

The head is allowed to become soft by an application of damp sawdust, which has the effect of making it pliable. This condition being attained the head should be carefully examined, and any little defects such as holes remedied by careful sewing by hand.

The ears of the skin are removed as they usually appear too far back now that the head is to be mounted smaller than its original size. The ears themselves have quite often to be narrowed down.

MOUNTING OF HEADS

After this has been done, the head is thoroughly damped and stretched on a block, care being taken that the eyelids remain open. A few pins should be used in order to prevent these from closing during operations. This precaution will permit of the eyes being inserted under the head after it has become dry. The eyes are kept in position by means of a piece of leather which is sewn on inside. If the eyelids and nose are enamelled this will tend to give them a more natural appearance. The small piece of nasty hard substance which is found under the ear of the skin should always be cut away in the first place.

With regard to the actual nailing of the head on the skull, a method which is very often resorted to consists of passing a piece of string round the edges of the block, the first nail being fastened at the extreme end of the nose and at particular points at the sides of the head, as indicated in diagram 176. This will have the effect of pressing the forehead and will assist the leather in falling to the shape of the skull.

In the case of heads mounted on skull, an impression should be made of the shape of the skull in paper, as shown in diagram 177.

It should be carefully nailed flat after having remained in sawdust for a few hours and then thoroughly damped, repaired, and the ears adjusted. The nailing should then be carried out as shown in diagram. The two juts in diagram 177 are sewn together forming the shape of the skull, whilst parts marked (turns under) on either side of the skull should be of sufficient length to extend and meet under the throat.

FURS AND FURRIERY

In the cheaper varieties of furs the same lines of mounting skulls are followed except that one dispenses with some of the more intricate work such as the placing of the eyes underneath the head. In this case the eyes are fastened above.

It is hardly necessary to go deeply into the methods for turning out cheaper heads. The above instances suffice to show the principles of the mounting of skulls

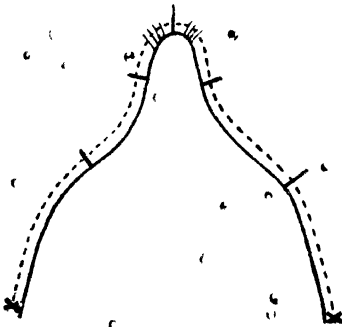


DIAGRAM 176

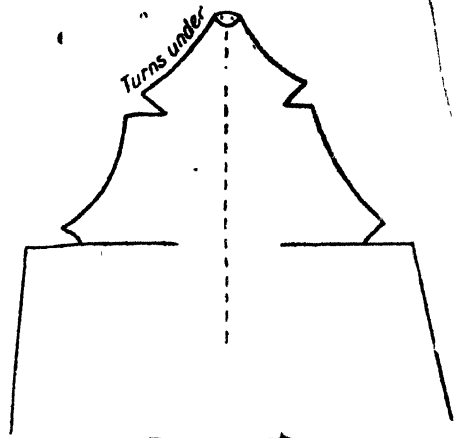


DIAGRAM 177

and should be followed in the cheaper varieties just as carefully as is possible.

BONING OF TAILS

Dressers often fail to remove the bone from tails, and this duty falls to the cutter, as the tail should not be worked with the bone, for it will make an ugly and hard adornment to an article. Either the whole of the bone, or sometimes half, is left in the tail by the dresser. In either case this must be removed.

In order to do this satisfactorily the tail should be

BONING OF TAILS

left in damp sawdust for some 24 hours. This will soften the bone as well as the pelt, and so the two may be separated quite easily. The tail should then be opened from the under-part. During this process extreme care should be exercised that the tip of the tail is not broken or that more is left on one side, after being split, than on the other. It should be split exactly down the middle.

To assist in the cutting of the tail, the rib of an umbrella should prove very useful.

If the umbrella rib is inserted into the tail, the knife may be easily run along the groove of the rib without fear of other than a straight cut being made. If this is done, the knife does not come into contact with the bone in the operation of cutting.

In the case of the ermine, it will not be found necessary to lay in "damp" for any long period. The bone of the tail may be left in the lower part, namely, the black portion.

CHAPTER LI

DAMAGES

DAMAGES are liable to appear in all skins in the trade and may be attributed to the following causes: shot skins, which would, of course, show the bullet-holes; "bites," which are the result of fights the animals take part in; tears, which may be due to either the animal being caught in a trap, or in the removal of the animal's coat by the trappers, or in dressing; and lastly, disease. It is evident that any of the above damages may appear in any part of the skin.

In such skins as the fox, a small damage would not depreciate the value of the skin to a very great extent, as any such defects may be hidden by the high pile; if skilfully worked. On the other hand, skins of the broadtail variety entirely lose their value if they are damaged at all, for they cannot be successfully repaired without bad seams showing, this being due to the flatness of the pile.

Skins in general should be freed from all damages and holes before working operations are commenced upon the article.

Damages should be removed in such a manner that will least show, and an irregular cut in preference to a straight cut should always be adopted.

Diagrams 179 marked E and 178 marked D illustrate the method of removing a hole in a portion of a skin which is uniform in colour and pile. The tongue, it will be noticed, is vandyked to hide the seam. This

DAMAGES

method would be applicable in coneys, seals and general skins where the tongues can be used. E cut is used when the hole is larger, and is adopted in order to remove the material from two sides in the place of one to avoid puckering.

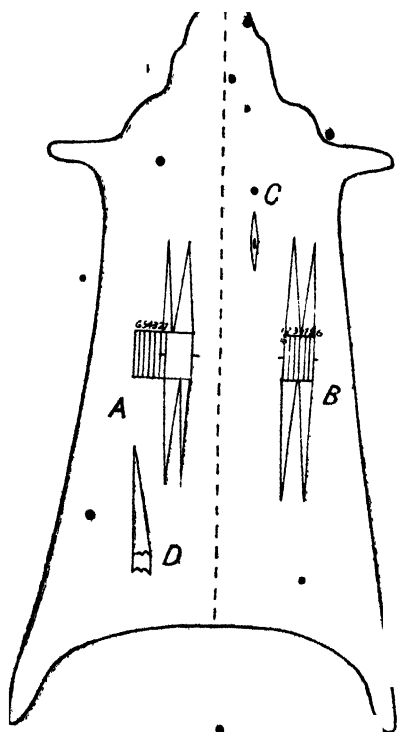


DIAGRAM 178

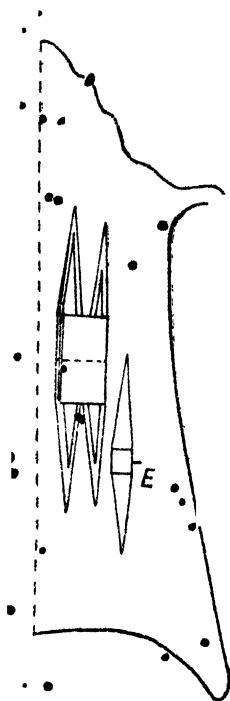


DIAGRAM 179

If the damage is of a small nature, the straight cut as shown in diagram 178 marked C is preferable, as this method will do away with unnecessary seams.

In order to cover the general principles which apply to the removal of damages, the sable skin is taken as an instance, particularly as this type of skin varies

FURS AND FURRIERY

in growth of hair as well as in colour. It also possesses a dark stripe.

Let us suppose a sable has a damage on one side of the stripe, as in diagram 178 marked A. In the first place, a piece is removed on the opposite side of the stripe half the size of the damage corresponding to the same position as the damage side marked B, also found in diagram 180. This should be cut into small strips and reversed in order to ensure the flow of hair in the right direction. Removing this damage by other means makes it liable to show bad joins, as the hair is displaced to too great an extent.

"This method of procedure will tend to make both sides



Size of piece removed

DIAGRAM 180

of the stripe uniform, by dividing the damage and thus decreasing the possibility of any defects being visible.

Diagram 179 gives a method of removing an oblong damage by means of tongues, one in the other, in order to displace the hair as little as possible. The two holes are filled in by tongues let down as demonstrated.

In the case of a damage appearing in the skin at the point indicated in diagram 181, which is a very large one and appears only on one side, it is perhaps advisable to cut the skin through above and below rather than displace the skin to too great an extent. The skin may then be joined up by means of a vandyke seam. This method should be far more successful than any complicated method, in trying to dispose of a large damage in so prominent a part of the skin.

DAMAGES

In adopting this, one should take care to split the skins, so that the repaired portion is divided. The damage referred to is marked A in diagram 181. In splitting

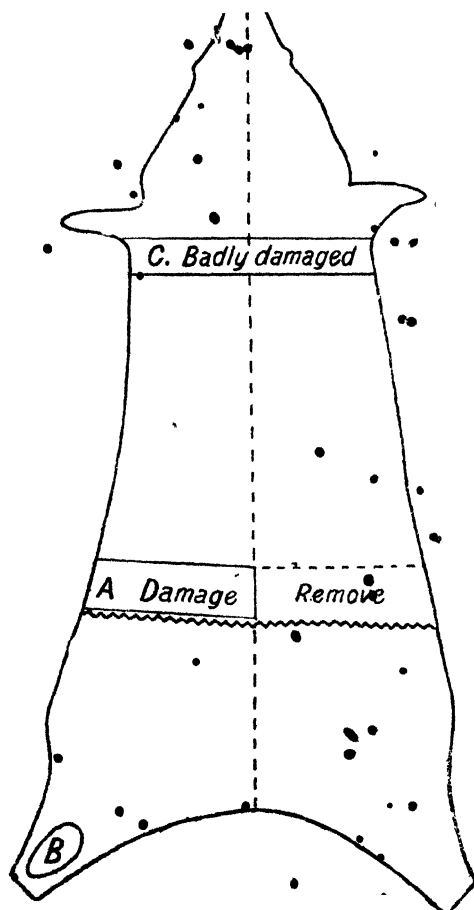


DIAGRAM 181

the skins the whole of the head should be left on half of each skin and not cut through. As an alternative to this method drop one half in the length, which will

FURS AND FURRIERY

give a skin of unequal halves, but for the particular article required it may be quite suitable (the half dropped is the damaged part).

Point B in diagram 181 shows a damage at the paw of a skin. In remedying this it is far better to remove the whole paw and replace with another one. The reason why this is suggested is because the paw is very flat and will not permit of any cuts being made.

A further damage may appear at the head of a skin as marked C in diagram 181. This again should be

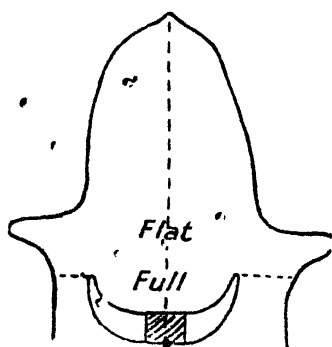


DIAGRAM 182



DIAGRAM 183

dealt with by the simplest method. The skin should be cut through and joined, after the damage has been removed, even though a good portion of the skin is lost in the process. It should be remembered that in the repair of all damaged skins irregularity goes a long way towards perfecting the seams and restoring to the article its good appearance. It must, of course, be assumed that all the damages referred to in diagrams 178 and 179 do not appear in the one skin.

In beaver skins, cracks often appear in the skin, these may be cut through and sewn over.

In the case of a damage appearing in a fitch skin,

REPAIRS

at a part indicated in diagram 182, the following method should be used to remove same. The material is moved round from each side of the skin thus preventing the ordinary tongue being used, which is likely to move flat material into full. Care must be taken before operating, to discover whether the damage is in the full-piled part, which is the only time the cut may be used. If a similar damage appears lower down, an ordinary tongue could be used.

Diagram 183 shows a method of removing two damages in close proximity in a seal skin. Parts marked with X indicate damages, and are lifted as shown.

In skins of the Persian type, pieces may be inserted where damages or holes occur, in preference to making cuts, as such skins lend themselves very well to piecing. This also applies to other types of skins. It is always a question of discretion on the part of the cutter. Many other forms of damages occur. The particulars above will give the principle of removing same.

REPAIRS

Repairs are usually undertaken by all furriers, although some specialise in this particular branch of the trade.

The points of importance so far as repairs are concerned, are enumerated below.

Very little satisfaction is ever obtained in the repair of a cheaper grade of skin, owing to the fact that such skins usually wear rather badly, and when sent for repair are often too far gone.

In considering, however, the better classes such as

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sables, stone martens and such premier skins, signs of bad wear only appear in those regions which receive the most friction. In the case of ties, it would no doubt be the neck, whilst in a muff the hand holes and the side held against the wearer, would be first to rub. Before any repairs are effected the article is sent to the cleaners. On its return, the worn parts are removed and the work completed. Additions are often needed to bring the article to a more up-to-date shape, which causes a great deal of trouble in the matching of additional material. Sables, like most skins have a tendency to fade and so lose their original colour.

The points in this particular work are so varied that it is almost impossible to deal with every individual skin, but a few good hints if borne in mind and applied in general repairs will greatly assist the worker. Where additions are required, one should try and split the skin so that half the new material and half the old are joined together.

This, of course, applies particularly when a good match is desired. On the other hand, assuming the article to be repaired is a muff, it may be advisable for one to use the new skin for the front of the article and the better parts of the old material at the back. By applying this method, the slight difference in matching will not be so noticeable.

In the case of damages through moth or hard wearing the defects should be removed by a series of cuts dealt with fully under the heading of "Damages," page 336. As explained therein, such damages should be carried out by a series of cuts in preference to piecing.

Skins which are not of the same shade may often,

REPAIRS

be "topped." By this process one is usually able to obtain a very satisfactory matching surface. No specific rules can be laid down in this work, as each particular occasion calls for the discretion of the worker in choosing the most satisfactory method.

In the renovating and repairing of fur coats it is always advisable to remove a portion of the coat which is not very prominent and utilise this for the worn-out parts. Such a portion should be replaced by new skins.

With regard to joining in the length of such skins as sable or mink, one may again introduce a flounce, which really consists of a few rows of skins worked in the reverse manner. Again, a little difference in colour is not so easily detected as the flow of hair from the body of the coat to the flounce is not continuous.

It should be remembered that in cleaning the article or garment prior to repairing one will discover the greasy and matted parts, and so be able to remedy them.

In re-dyeing garments which need renovation or remodelling it is not necessary to effect the work before the dyeing process is done. Sufficient material to remodel the article should be sent to the dyers together with the original garment, so that the whole may go into the same vat. In this way the same shade will be obtained.

No work on any garment should be commenced until all hemming and joining seams have been carefully removed, so that a clean, straight surface as near as possible to the original is procured. Reference should be made to the heading of each particular skins for further points.

CHAPTER LII

FINISHING OF GARMENTS

A FACTOR of importance which must not be relegated to the background is the finishing of a coat. Although the best workmanship in the cutting, nailing, etc., may be given, the final result will not show that so much experienced labour has been justified unless the finishing is effected with great care and in a proper manner.

A number of methods are applied by some coat-makers of to-day which are considered to be of a labour-saving nature; for instance, the sewing of the side seams of a garment by inserting the two edges of the side seams and a piece of tape under the cup of the machine, which is termed "taping" a garment. This, however, has the effect of twisting important seams with unsatisfactory results.

This will serve as one demonstration of what is sometimes considered a "labour-saving" device. It will, of course, save a little time, but to the cost of the garment's ultimate appearance.

In dealing fully with this question, let us consider what should happen to the garment when it leaves the cutter's hands.

It rests with the finisher to sew tape flat round the edges of the under-sleeve, side seams, arm-holes, shoulder seams and neck of the coat, as well as in other parts which are liable to be twisted in the handling of the article. The under-collar should also be taped. The coat should then be returned to the

FINISHING OF GARMENTS

cutter upon whom devolves the duty of tacking the garment into position, after which it is handed to the machinist to close. The sleeves should be placed in the proper position by the cutter according to the particular figure that is being fitted and then tacked in a manner which will prevent the machinist from disarranging same.

These points may seem to most cutters to be out of their particular sphere, but bearing in mind that they are responsible for the finished article, some twenty minutes spent on the fixing of a garment together in order to assure a perfect result should be well worth while.

The coat at this stage has been closed and returned to the cutter who should then either undertake the process of pressing himself, or hand it to the experienced presser. Again, the importance of pressing cannot be too strongly emphasised. All seams should be well pressed down. The side seams of the coat and those of the sleeves and armholes should be made as flat as possible. The collar, leather outwards, should then be placed across a block, similar in shape, and the edge of the collar should receive the presser's special attention.

Any additional softening that is required should be done at this stage and the article handed back to be finished with instructions which will vary according to the particular fur in question.

If the garment is a seal musquash coat or a mole coat, or consists of a fur which is rather thin and liable to tear, a piece of very soft material should be placed across it and stitched at close intervals. This will prevent the leather from tearing if the garment

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is subjected to any violent movement whilst in wear.

In the completion of the garment the buttons should be fastened well down with a piece of some substance such as leather in order to prevent same being pulled out. The collar, etc., should be canvassed, sewn, and tacked at intervals in order that a flat surface may be obtained.

No easing or pleating should be permitted in the collar of the coat. As has been previously mentioned, the collar being such an important feature, it should be correctly fixed.

The seam joining the top and under collar together should be pulled under in order that it should not be seen in such an important part of the garment.

In certain garments one may find it necessary to insert a rolled piece of wool in the edge of the coat, but this precaution will only apply to particular instances.

At this stage the coat should be complete except for the lining, which there is no need to discuss, as all the principles affecting the general appearance of a garment from the furrier's point of view have already been fully dealt with, and all points emphasised which go to the making of a perfect fitting coat.

FINISHING OF SMALL FURS

In the finishing of muffs and ties, the important factor is the softness of the article on completion.

In following up the processes to which these articles are subjected, we find that when they are removed from the nailing board, it falls to the cutter to best

FINISHING OF GARMENTS

cleanse and rid them of any hardness that they may have acquired during the process of work, after which they should be evened or straightened off. The fact that certain skins vary in size from the head to the rump should be taken into consideration, and in the finishing of such articles allowances should be made on the leather side for this difference. In the fox, for example, in order that the skin should appear straight on completion, it will be found necessary to allow a little more width at the level of the front paws on account of the extreme flatness which occurs at that part.

If a straight cut were made without such allowances being given the result would be that the skin would fall at that particular point, which is, of course, to be avoided. If extreme width is required in an article it should be taped, but it is advisable to use tape as rarely as possible, as the effect of the over-sewing machine on the article tends to twist same. Flat tape placed on by hand should be resorted to.

Articles should be as soft as possible when completed and in the better-class furs demette should be used.

The aim of the worker in the finishing of smaller furs should always be to make them as soft to the touch as possible.

ADDENDUM

CHAPTER' LIII

IMITATION FURS

THE writer of this work has been specially requested by the publishers to deal with the subject of imitation furs.

To begin with, imitation furs must be divided into two classes, namely, cheap and common furs which are made up to imitate the superior quality furs, and cloth, which is so treated as to closely resemble fur.

The writer feels that this article will prove of greater interest to the general buying public than to the actual worker, for it is obvious that none with experience in the fur trade would for a moment be deceived by any imitation. Whilst on this subject, however, it does often occur that skins of certain types are "camouflaged" to such a degree and resemble the better-class furs to such an extent that they are even sold as the genuine article quite innocently. The writer wishes to mention an incident of this kind which occurred during his own experience. An Australian seal dyed coney passed through several hands and was sold as a seal musquash. The resemblance was so close and the imitation so perfect that had not the actual worker been able to distinguish between the real and the imitation article, it would have been sold quite innocently as a seal musquash and not as a rabbit. An error of judgment often occurs as to the place of origin of a particular skin, buyers often purchasing a skin which is supposed to

IMITATION FURS

emanate from one district whereas in reality it comes from another. For instance, in such cases as fox, specimens of Gray Fox and Kitt Fox have sometimes such a close resemblance to one another that only one experienced in the handling of the article would be able to distinguish the difference between the two. Various other foxes of this colour have often been substituted one for the other.

In order to further enterprise in the fur trade one has to resort to dyeing, topping and other practices now in vogue, not of course for the purpose of deluding the public, but for the improvement of the cheaper furs and to make them resemble the better-class varieties as far as possible. So far as the selling of one for the other to the general public is concerned, this is seldom done. The American weasel is, however, sometimes sold as ermine, whilst the astrakhan is often put on the market as Persian. This usually is due to lack of judgment on the part of the seller.

The following are a few of the commoner furs which are made up to resemble the better-class skins. The common hare is dyed all colours to imitate the fox; marmot is dyed to resemble such furs as mink and sable; whilst opossum is treated in such a manner as to resemble the skunk. The latter imitation has recently been in use to a very great extent. Coneys are dyed and sheared to look like seal skins and seal musquash is also used for this purpose with excellent results.

With regard to sables which are topped, these are considered to be one of the finest imitations. The only method of determining if the skin is so treated is to part the hairs, when it will be seen that there is a

FURS AND FURRIERY

difference of colour between the various parts of the underground of the pile. The topping of a sable is usually dark, whilst half-way down the depth of the hair one notices the natural pale ground which was originally more or less the same colour as the surface before the topping was applied. Pale squirrels are similarly treated, being blended to a dark shade of blue.

Dingos or dog-skins, again, have been used to imitate foxes, and in the good qualities are hardly distinguishable from the Common Fox.

We now come to what we think may be termed eccentricities in furs. Rabbits are dyed and stencilled to resemble leopards, tigers and civet cats, whilst squirrels are topped to imitate chinchilla very satisfactorily. Canadian sables which are yellow in colour are also topped. This brings them to a dark shade and their similarity in appearance to the Russian sable is very close. Grey foxes are very cleverly treated by dyers and are made to look like silver foxes.

With regard to the second class of imitations referred to, cloth coats are got up to imitate furs such as natural musquash, Persian, caracal and, lastly, pony. Although in the former cases one does not feel that very much harm is done to the legitimate trade, this, is not so in the case of pony. In this instance, the imitation is usually so cleverly effected that only a critical eye would discover the counterfeit.

At the period when pony coats were popular, and the difference in appearance between the real skin and the cloth imitation very small in the eye of the general public, the result was that the popularity of

IMITATION FURS

the real pony skin suffered to a very great extent. In spite of the fact, however, that the similarity between the two articles was so extraordinary, the imitation was never sold for the real article.

In conclusion, the writer begs to point out that, although the publishers, when requesting the inclusion of this article, intended that it should act as a guide in the discrimination between the real fur and the imitation, the reader will understand that this is essentially the knowledge of the furrier, and is only acquired by constant practice and general experience in the trade itself.

Finally, it may be said that furs are usually considered good and classed amongst the first types, not only when they are scarce and difficult to obtain, but also if they possess a beautiful silky coat, in some cases with a fine pile. In most cases, the general public is usually able to distinguish between the genuine article and the imitation when both are laid side by side and compared.

•MOTHS

The above-named little insects are truly a bane to the furrier. Many beautiful pelts in the raw and many made-up garments have these pests destroyed. Various anti-moth remedies are sold to and used by the furrier, but none of them are altogether satisfactory. Camphor, cedar chips, tar paper, tobacco, and naphthalene are fairly effective, but, in addition, furs should be handled and beaten freely.

For huge quantities of pelts, however, cold storage undoubtedly solves the problem, as moths cannot live in the freezing temperature there maintained.

FURS AND FURRIERY

Moths firstly devour the hair at the roots, and then proceed to perforate the leather, rendering the skins useless.

For private possessors of costly furs, the best plan is to carefully wrap the precious articles in paper and place them in a box with a close-fitting lid which is rendered as airtight as possible by being pasted down. This procedure would, of course, be adopted during the summer months when moths are chiefly prevalent.

The Chinese are said to have a novel plan for insuring themselves against damage to their goods by moths. Should a merchant be in possession of a quantity of furs which may not be disposed of for some time, he places them with a pawnbroker who is under an obligation to deliver them in perfect condition, thus relieving *himself* of the moth nuisance!

FUR SEWING MACHINES

Some thirty years ago, the progress of work was considerably hindered owing to the fact that articles had to be sewn by hand. The machines in vogue at this period (only few) were glove machines, which however were not rigid enough to be used successfully on all classes of furs. It was about the year 1880 that an American first made a machine, which had wide possibilities. Germany also helped in the direction of producing machines which could satisfactorily sew furs. The use of machines at this period was not great. Perfection had not yet been reached, and skins could not be wholly satisfactorily joined.

This country then entered the market, a machine being patented some nineteen years ago. These machines

FUR SEWING MACHINES

were produced here and gave even greater promise. In the year 1901, a really satisfactory machine which did the work well was invented by the firm of Allbook & Hashfield, and patented. It was sold under the name of the "Success" sewing machine. Greater strides were made, and in the year 1911 a silent high-speed machine which brought us a step nearer to perfection was produced. This machine did much to persuade the general trade to adopt it in place of hand-sewing, and, except for a few exclusive firms, fur machines are universally used. Later on, the demand of the fur trade necessitated the use of power machines, for until this period only treadle machines were used. Our English manufacturers kept in line in producing high-speed machines capable of being driven by motor. This has enabled the work to be carried out with greater speed in order to keep up with the demand of the times. It should still be borne in mind, however, that one is able to get, even to-day, a better result in certain types of finer furs if the sewing is accomplished by hand.

FORMULÆ

No. 1.—To dye the pelt side of moles (alternatively to treatment by dyes), use aniline black and methylated spirits. To be applied before nailing, and allowed to dry, thoroughly damp and then nailed.

No. 2.—For obtaining lustre on nutria skins. Sulphuric acid diluted 3 to 1 of water. Applied to the finished article with a brush.

No. 3.—Alternative method to formula No. 2. Combination of vinegar, benzine and sawdust. Iron well on completion with warm iron. The iron should be covered with brown paper.

No. 4.—To darken the ground of skunk skins, apply on the leather side the following dye: 1 oz. of spirit black mixed with $\frac{1}{2}$ gall. of methylated spirits. Allow the article to dry, re-damp and nail.

No. 5.—To revive lustre in chinchilla that has been lost in the working, apply violet powder.

No. 6.—Acetic acid applied on the hair side of Persians restores lost lustre. In the event of no acetic acid being at hand, ordinary vinegar is the next best substitute.

No. 7.—Boiled linseed applied with a brush the reverse way of the hair, gives lustre to seal musquash skins.

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